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THREE MEN OF LETTERS

BY

MOSES COIT TYLER

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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PREFACE.

Of the three chapters in literary biography and criticism here brought together, the first was an incidental product of the researches which I made some years ago when working upon my "History of American Literature during the Colonial Time;" and while the subject of this monograph could hardly fail to throw a curious and a not unpleasing side-light upon the conditions and moods of intellectual life in America during the half-century just prior to the Revolution, it could not properly be included in the book in connection with which it was written. As it has never been in print, except in a form well-nigh inaccessible to the general reader, I hope I shall not offend him by now revising it, amending it, and giving it a place in this little book. I will not deny that I shall be very glad if, by seeking a larger publicity for my paper on Berkeley, I may succeed in extending somewhat the memory

and the appreciation of our great debt to one of the wisest, friendliest, and helpfulest of European visitors who ever touched on these shores.

Tne last two monographs here given were prepared for a work on which I have been for a considerable time engaged, and which is soon to be sent to the press,—"The Literary History of the American Revolution;" but as the chief activity of the two writers thus dealt with belongs to the period immediately after the Revolution, I have deemed it best to exclude them from that work. Without question, however, for our literary history during the first thirty or forty years of the independent republic, these two writers are representative men; and both for their own sakes, and for their obvious use in the interpretation of American thought and life in that period of national gestation, I have hoped that the monographs devoted to them might have some value even in this detached form.

M. C. T.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY,
2 November, 1894.

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I.

GEORGE BERKELEY AND HIS AMERICAN VISIT.

I.

GEORGE BERKELEY AND HIS AMERICAN VISIT.

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VIII—Berkeley's place in the long line of distinguished European visitors to America—Failure of his dream of preventing corruption in the New World—His remedy for corruption.

I.

ON the 23d of January, 1729, a British ship of about two hundred and fifty tons was seen hovering off the coast of Rhode Island and making signals for a pilot. In response to these signals two pilots boarded the ship. It proved to be the hired vessel of an eminent

Anglican clergyman, the Very Reverend George Berkeley, Dean of Derry, who had with him his wife and a small party of friends, and was desirous of landing somewhere in Rhode Island. The pilots informed him that the harbor of Newport was near, and that in the town there was an Episcopal church, the minister of which was the Reverend James Honyman. At once the Dean wrote a letter to Mr. Honyman, notifying him of his approach. What followed is best told in the picturesque narrative of a local historian of the event. The pilots took the Dean's letter "on shore at Conanicut Island, and called on Mr. Gardner and Mr. Martin, two members of Mr. Honyman's church, informing them that a great dignitary of the Church of England, called Dean, was on board the ship, together with other gentlemen passengers. They handed them the letter from the Dean, which Gardner and Martin brought to Newport with all possible dispatch. On their arrival they found Mr. Honyman was at church, it being a holiday on which divine service was held there. They then sent the letter by a servant, who delivered it to Mr. Honyman in his pulpit. He opened

it, and read it to the congregation, from the contents of which it appeared the Dean might be expected to land in Newport every moment. The church was dismissed with the blessing, and Mr. Honyman, with the wardens, vestry, and congregation, male and female, repaired immediately to the wharf, where they arrived a little before the Dean, his family, and friends."[1]

On the day after this notable event a Newport correspondent of "The New England Weekly Courier" thus announced the news to the people of Boston; "Yesterday arrived here Dean Berkeley, of Londonderry, in a pretty large ship. He is a gentleman of middle stature, of an agreeable, pleasant, and erect aspect. He was ushered into the town with a great number of gentlemen, to whom he behaved himself after a very complaisant manner. 'T is said he proposes to tarry here with his family about three months."

Instead of tarrying there only about three months the Dean tarried there nearly three years. He soon purchased a farm three or

[1] W. Updike, "History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett," 395.

four miles from Newport, near the sea; and he built there a large house, which he named "Whitehall." He had brought with him not only ample wealth in money and in personal and household goods, but a library of several thousand volumes. During the whole time of his sojourn in America he lived very quietly, and in almost unbroken retirement. He was kindly and familiar with people of all religious faiths in Newport. Occasionally he preached in the Newport church, or went with the faithful missionary, Mr. Honyman, among the Narragansett Indians. He was the highest officer of the Anglican Church who had ever been in America; and his coming hither, and his long stay here were a mystery to the public, and to some of them, likewise, a source of alarm. It was said that he intended to found a college at the Bermudas: but, if so, why did he not go to the Bermudas, and set about it? There were some who suspected that he might be an emissary of the English Church, and that he had come to New England with the subtile purpose of laying some kind of prelatical mine for the blowing up and destruction of the ec-

clesiastical system already established there. Several years before Berkeley's arrival, Timothy Cutler, the president of Yale College, Daniel Brown, its tutor, together with two prominent Congregational pastors in Connecticut, Samuel Johnson and James Wetmore, had gone over in a body to the English Church. The event had produced no little consternation. Was it not likely that the astute and plausible Dean of Derry had come out to America to entice others of the New England ministry into a similar defection? At any rate the proceedings of the Dean would bear watching.

And on his part, there seemed to be not the least objection to their being watched. He had nothing to conceal. It did appear somewhat strange that an ambitious and dangerous ecclesiastical emissary, instead of pushing out into the colonies, and making acquaintances among the people, should have retired to the solitude of an island on the coast, and should have spent his time there after the manner of a philosophical hermit. Certainly he was affable to all whom by any accident he fell in with; and he courteously received all, whether distinguished

or undistinguished, who chose to call upon him; but he solicited no man's company; he interfered with no man's opinions. In the way of charity he gave much, but himself had no favors to ask. Excepting occasional missionary tours among the Indians, and a single visit to Boston for the purpose of taking ship for England, he made no journeys into the country that he was credited with the design of subjugating; and when at last he took his leave of America, and returned to England, he left after him only a beautiful and gracious memory,—the memory of a blameless, wise, benignant, and helpful presence upon these shores. Here was born to him his eldest son, Henry; and here also was born, and here died, his second child, Lucia, whose body was laid tenderly in Trinity churchyard at Newport; here he wrote his greatest and most famous literary work, the philosophical dialogue called "Alciphron"; and here, by the disinterested and catholic love which he manifested for America, by the stimulus he gave to philosophical and classical studies in this country, and especially by the magnanimous and inspiring faith he uttered in the des-

tinies of civilization in America, he won for himself a title to our perpetual remembrance and gratitude.

As has been already mentioned, Berkeley's visit to America, and his long and seemingly purposeless residence here, were not understood in his own time by the public on either side of the Atlantic; and it may be added that, though the materials for understanding the reasons both for his coming and for his going have at last been fully spread before the public,[1] there still lingers over the subject something of the mystery which invested it a hundred and fifty years ago. To persons who have not yet taken the pains to study carefully the materials just referred to, it may still seem strange, that a devout and aggressive clergyman of the English Church, holding the high office of Dean, in the

[1] The chief depositaries of materials relating to Berkeley are the following: "The Works of George Berkeley," edited by A. C. Fraser, 3 vols., Oxford, 1871; "Life and Letters of George Berkeley," by A. C. Fraser, 1871; "Berkeley," by A. C. Fraser, Edinburgh and Philadelphia, 1881, containing biographical facts brought to light since 1871; and the series of admirable historical and biographical works produced by the Reverend E. E. Beardsley, of New Haven, particularly his "Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson, D.D.," New York, 1874.

prime of his life, in the full vigor of his health, should have withdrawn himself from his duties at home, and with his wife, his household goods, his books, and a few friends, should have settled down in a secluded spot on the coast of America; should have there sauntered and loitered for nearly three years, and then, apparently without achieving, or trying to achieve, any visible result which he could not have accomplished as well by staying at home, should have gathered up his effects, and have sailed back to England.

In reality, however, Berkeley's American visit was, in its plan, its execution, and its fruit, much more than it seemed to the public eye, either at that time or since; and while it was a thing that could have been projected only by an idealist and a moral enthusiast—such as Berkeley was—it must be pronounced, even on cool survey, a mission of chivalric benevolence certainly, but also of profound and even creative sagacity. In its boldness and its generosity it was dictated by an apostolic disinterestedness and courage to which, of course, that age was unaccustomed, and which places

it in the light of an almost comic incongruity with the spirit of the time in which it occurred. In the history of our colonial period it forms a romantic chapter. But, in order to understand it, we need first to understand Berkeley himself, as well as his attitude toward the period he lived in.

II.

He was born in Ireland, County Kilkenny, on the 12th of March, 1685, being descended from Cavalier English ancestry, and particularly related to the family of Lord Berkeley, of Stratton. He studied at the famous Kilkenny school, which has been called "the Eton of Ireland"; and in 1700 he entered Trinity College, Dublin, where he continued to reside as student and fellow for the next thirteen years, and where he achieved the highest distinction for scholarship, and especially for original philosophical thought.

From childhood he had been an unusual person. To his associates in particular he had been an object of wonder or of mirth, by the eccentricity of his enthusiasms, and by his

marvellous fertility in the dreaming of gorgeous and impossible dreams for the improvement of mankind in knowledge, virtue, and happiness. As he ripened into manhood he became a person of extraordinary attractions. He was of singular beauty and geniality; his learning was great; he had uncommon genius for scientific and metaphysical speculation; as a conversationist he was remarkable even in an age in which conversation was cultivated as a fine art; and all these brilliant qualities in him were crowned by the mildness, the tender and earnest charity, of a devout Christian. In 1709 he received his first ordination; and thenceforward to the end of his days, though he never had regular service as a parish priest, he was a frequent and a very impressive preacher; indeed, he was a great and an eloqent philosopher in the pulpit, taking his place in that illustrious line of mighty thinkers in the Christian ministry in which stand Butler, Cudworth, Barrow, Hooker, Fenelon, Malebranche, Aquinas, Augustine, Origen, and Saint Paul,—men to whom theology was "the highest form of philosophy,

and the reverential spirit of religion its noblest consecration."

Even before his ordination, in 1709, Berkeley had begun to produce those philosophical writings in which he gradually unfolded his celebrated ideal theory of the universe.[1] This theory begins with a negative proposition—a denial of the existence of matter independent of spirit. But it at once proceeds to an affirmative proposition, involving a "truth of unsurpassed grandeur, simplicity, profundity, and weight," namely, that the only true substance is spirit; that the only true cause is an intelligent will; therefore, that whatever exists, or appears to exist, can be philosophically explained only through the powers and qualities of spirit.

The special use which Berkeley made of his theory was in refutation of the anti-religious

[1] The writings particularly referred to are "Common Place Book," in "Life and Letters," 419-508; "An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision," published in 1709; "A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge," 1710; "Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonus," 1713. In these writings his theory is progressively stated and defended; and the last of them is what Fraser calls it, "the gem of British metaphysical literature."

philosophy of his time. He thought that a belief in the absolute existence of matter leads to atheism. Against this tendency he set his own theory,—one of great subtlety and logical power,—wherein the so-called material universe is but a vast system of symbols "through which the Deity makes His being and His attributes known to man. . . . What seems, or is taken to be, the material universe, is simply the manifested ideas of God."[1]

Since our sensible perceptions "must be caused, and since they cannot be caused by non-causative and hence non-existent, matter, they must be ascribed to the agency of God, the Supreme Spirit. The world is God's voice, His language a set of symbols or signs. Physical science, neglecting the questions of essential being and causation, has but to ascertain and record these symbols in their observable order of co-existence and sequence. Philosophy shows that through them we are in communion with, and gracious dependence on, an omnipresent Deity."[2]

[1] F. Ueberweg, "A History of Philosophy," ii., 383-384.
[2] George S. Morris, "British Thought and Thinkers," 221-

III.

Thus, down to the year 1713, when he had reached his twenty-third year, the life of George Berkeley had passed in studious retirement, mainly in Trinity College, Dublin. He had got well acquainted with books; he knew little of men, of cities, of the ways of society in the great world outside the walls of his college. Now began the epoch in his life, nearly eight years long, in which he devoted himself to travel, and to the direct study of human nature and human society. He had already begun to reap some portion of his great fame as a metaphysician. Moreover, he had won the especial friendship of Jonathan Swift, who in the same year became Dean of Saint Patrick's, and who was destined directly and indirectly to have a decisive influence on Berkeley's fortunes. Early in January, 1713, young Berkeley went over to London, in order, as he said at the time, to print his "new book of Dialogues and to make acquaintance with men of merit."[1]

222. A condensed exposition of Berkeley's theory is given by Fraser in his edition of Berkeley's "Works," i., 118–121.

[1] "Berkeley," 97.

From the first he was under the powerful patronage of Swift, and by him was soon presented at the court of Queen Anne, as well as at the more illustrious court of the poets, wits, and philosophers who were shedding lustre upon that period. By his extraordinary conversational powers and by the charm of his character he at once made his way there into universal favor. Addison and Steele took him to their hearts. At Steele's request he wrote several papers for "The Guardian." By Pope and his troop of literary friends he was welcomed with affectionate admiration; and Pope himself formed for Berkeley that friendship which prompted him, years afterward, when Berkeley had risen to be Bishop of Cloyne, to pay to the prelate a superb poetic tribute:

> "Even in a bishop I can spy desert.
> Secker is decent; Rundle has a heart;
> Manners with candor are to Benson given;
> To Berkeley—every virtue under heaven."

One of the great figures in London society, at the time of Berkeley's entrance into it, was Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester. He had been hearing, on all hands, praises of the

brilliant young Dublin philosopher and divine, who had made a sudden and brilliant dash into the elegant world of London, and he expressed a desire to see him. Accordingly, one day, the Earl of Berkeley introduced his kinsman to the Bishop, and after the interview was over, the Earl said, "Does my cousin answer your lordship's expectations?" The Bishop, lifting up his hands, said fervently, "So much understanding, so much knowledge, so much innocence, and such humility, I did not think had been the portion of any but angels, till I saw this gentleman." [1]

After a few months spent by him in these splendid scenes in London, Berkeley's mind seemed eager to inspect still more of the life and manners of men; and accordingly, in the autumn of 1713, he accepted the position of chaplain and secretary to the Earl of Peterborough, who was then setting out as ambassador to the King of Sicily. Thus began Berkeley's long sojourn upon the continent,—first, for a single year, and afterward for four years, a sojourn which gave him the

[1] "Life and Letters of George Berkeley," 59.

opportunity of making profound and extensive studies into the condition of European society.

IV.

Upon his final return to England from the continent, in 1720, Berkeley found there nearly everything that could shock and grieve him. The famous South-Sea speculations had just before reached their summit of madness and corruption, and fallen to the ground with a great crash, spreading almost inconceivable distress over England. The appalling spectacle of personal and social proflicacy which then met the eye of Berkeley in his own country, came to him as a dreadful sequel to all the revelations of folly and crime which his life upon the continent had made to him; and upon his sensitive and meditative spirit this wrought an impression that fixed the direction of his thoughts for the next ten years of his life. It was amid these mournful scenes of misery and wrong in Europe that he conceived the magnificent project that henceforward for a long

time absorbed him, and that brought him at last to America to attempt its realization.

By a pamphlet of Berkeley's, published anonymously in London in 1721, and entitled "An Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain," we are enabled to ascertain that in that year he had become well-nigh convinced that the political and moral diseases of the Old World, and especially of his own country, had at last reached the vital organs of civilization, and were incurable. "I know it is an old folly to make peevish complaints of the times, and charge the common failures of human nature on a particular age. One may nevertheless venture to affirm that the present hath brought forth new and portentous villanies, not to be paralleled in our own or any other history. We have been long preparing for some great catastrophe. Vice and villany have by degrees grown reputable among us. . . . We have made a jest of public spirit, and cancelled all respect for whatever our laws and religion repute sacred. The old English modesty is quite worn off; and, instead of blushing for our crimes, we are

ashamed only of piety and virtue. In short, other nations have been wicked, but we are the first who have been wicked upon principle. The truth is, our symptoms are so bad that, notwithstanding all the care and vigilance of the legislature, it is to be feared the final period of our state approaches."[1]

These being his fears respecting the future of civilization in the Old World, he seems to have concluded that there was no hope for the human race except in a gradual transfer of itself from the Old World to the New, where, freed from the clogs and goads of evil tradition, freed from the palsy and blindness and barrenness of society in its dotage, mankind might, at any rate, begin its career over again; and, avoiding the follies and the crimes that had brought Europe to the verge of destruction, might build for itself a future higher, broader, nobler, than its past. Whatever we may now think of this brave scheme, it was the scheme of no sordid or commonplace nature; it was the scheme of a profound thinker and of a most benevolent enthusiast. As he brooded

[1] Berkeley's "Works," iii., 210.

over this great thought, his mind had to utter itself in some expression loftier than even such noble prose as he could command. In those years it was, probably, that he composed that curious and now celebrated poem, on the decay, the helplessness, the hopelessness, of the Old World, and on the approach of a new and a grander era for human nature in the world beyond the sea,—a poem which will last among us as long as civilization shall hold out in this hemisphere, a poem that utters, perhaps, the most generous and most inspiring word about America ever spoken by any European. In the light of our present narrative we may be glad to read once more these familiar verses, as now having for us, possibly, the force of a fresh and a richer meaning:

"The muse, disgusted at an age and clime
Barren of every glorious theme,
In distant lands now waits a better time,
Producing subjects worthy fame.

"In happy climes, where, from the genial sun
And virgin earth such scenes ensue,
The force of art by nature seems outdone,
And fancied beauties by the true.

"In happy climes, the seat of innocence,
Where nature guides and virtue rules,
Where men shall not impose for truth and sense
The pedantry of courts and schools,—

"There shall be sung another Golden Age,
The rise of empire and of arts,
The good and great inspiring epic rage,
The wisest heads and noblest hearts.

"Not such as Europe breeds in her decay;
Such as she bred when fresh and young,
When heavenly flame did animate her clay,
By future poets shall be sung.

"Westward the course of empire takes its way;
The four first acts already past,
A fifth shall close the drama with the day;—
Time's noblest offspring is the last."[1]

Such was George Berkeley's superb and generous dream. To his spiritual and prophetic genius it seemed to be revealed, with the distinctness of vision, that the next great shifting in the central seat of the world's civi-

[1] Berkeley's "Works," iii., 232. In "R.I. Hist. Soc. Coll.," iv., 36, Professor Romeo Elton states that these verses "were written by Bishop Berkeley during his residence in Newport." Elton gives no authority for his statement; and it seems to have been carelessly made. All internal and collateral evidence points to the place and period suggested in the text.

lization was to be from the eastern hemisphere to the western,—from Europe to America. But when that event should take place, what was to prevent American civilization from going over the steps, and finally reaching the fatal end of civilization in Europe? In Berkeley's opinion nothing could avert this result but these two things: religion and learning, —the two walking hand in hand. The Old World was advancing to its doom, because the people of the Old World had lost the old-fashioned virtues of faith, reverence, and simplicity; had, consequently, ceased to be a "religious, brave, sincere people, of plain, uncorrupt manners, respecting inbred worth rather than titles and appearances;" had ceased to be "assertors of liberty, lovers of their country, jealous of their own rights, and unwilling to infringe the rights of others"; had ceased to be "improvers of learning and useful arts, enemies to luxury, tender of other men's lives, and prodigal of their own"[1]; and had become idlers, gamblers, spendthrifts, mockers, libertines, and atheists. Of course,

[1] Berkeley's "Works," iii., 211.

the only way to save the New World, when it should finally become the seat of civilization, from advancing to the same doom, was to save it from falling into the same degeneracy; and this could be accomplished in no other way than by the prompt, wise, and efficient organization in America, first, of religious training, second, of intellectual training,—in short, of the Christian church, and of the Christian school.

Both of these needs had been already in some measure provided for by the efforts of various bodies of Christians. It was chiefly to the second need of the New World—its intellectual need—that Berkeley resolved to devote his powers; and to this end he wrought out his scheme of a great American university. His idea was to establish this university at some spot that should be favorable to the health, industry, and morals of the students, and at the same time central and commodious for all the English possessions in the Western hemisphere, both insular and continental; and with this view, he fixed upon the islands of Bermuda. There he would begin by the erection of a single college, to be called "The College of St. Paul"; to be

governed by a president and nine fellows, who were to form the corporation. His own life he would devote to the great work, by going out personally as president; and he hoped to take with him as fellow-laborers the requisite number of accomplished and earnest scholars, whom he might be able to enlist for the task. The Bishop of London was to be the official visitor of the college; and the secretary of state for the American Colonies was to be its chancellor. In the charter which he drew up, the college was declared to be "for the instruction of students in literature and theology, with a view to the promotion of Christian civilization alike in the English and in the heathen parts of America."[1] In a letter to his friend Lord Percival, written in March, 1723, he revealed his purpose of giving his life to that object, mentioning, likewise, the reasons for preferring the Bermuda Islands; at the same time presenting "the bright vision of an academic home in those fair lands of the West, whose idyllic bliss poets had sung, and from which Christian civilization might now be made to radiate over the vast continent of

[1] "Life and Letters," 108.

America, with its magnificent possibilities in the future history of the race of man. Berkeley seemed to see a better republic than Plato's, and a grander Utopia than More's, as the issue of his ideal university in those Summer Isles."[1]

Of course, the realization of this scheme would require a large endowment. Berkeley himself had not sufficient fortune for the purpose; but he had what was more than equivalent to a fortune,—a wonderful power of imparting to others his own ideas, and even his own enthusiasms. Evidently his true course was to take such promotion in the Church at home as should come to him; and then, using all his opportunities for winning over men of wealth and influence, to keep steadily at work, and to bide his time. This course he took.

V.

In the latter part of 1721 he had returned to Dublin, as chaplain to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and at once had resumed his old relations in Trinity College—in which he was

[1] Fraser in "Berkeley," 121–122.

soon made divinity lecturer, Hebrew lecturer, senior proctor, and university preacher. Early in the following year, he had been made Dean of Dromore—a non-resident incumbency, the value of which was probably about fourteen hundred pounds. In 1723, Esther Vanhomrigh—the "Vanessa" of Dean Swift's love scandals—died, and in her will she surprised Berkeley by leaving him a legacy of about four thousand pounds. In 1724 good fortune still pursued him; for in that year he was given the Deanery of Derry, which both he and Dean Swift described as "the best preferment in Ireland." Thus he was well advanced on the glittering highway of promotion in the Church; but, instead of pursuing that path, he was still swayed by his eager purpose of giving up all and going out into the American wilderness to spend his life in founding a university there. He now thought that the time was fully ripe for him to go over to London, and to press for the accomplishment of his project. His success there was promoted in no small measure by Dean Swift, who, among other friendly acts, wrote from Dublin on behalf of

Berkeley a letter to Lord Carteret, a statesman whose influence Berkeley particularly wished to secure. This letter of Dean Swift's is an amusing revelation, both of his own character and of Berkeley's,—the one, worldly, ambitious, and without enthusiasm, yet steady and hearty in friendship; the other, spiritual, self-forgetting, and lost in daring schemes of doing some great service in the world for God and man. After mentioning to Lord Carteret Berkeley's personal history, and especially his recent promotion to be Dean of Derry, Swift continues: "Your Excellency will be frightened when I tell you all this is but an introduction; for I am now to mention his errand. He is an absolute philosopher with regard to money, titles, and power; and for three years past has been struck with a notion of founding a university at Bermudas, by a charter from the Crown. He has seduced several of the hopefullest young clergymen and others here, many of them well provided for, and all in the fairest way for preferment; but in England his conquests are greater, and I doubt will spread very far this winter. He showed me a little tract which he designs

to publish; and there your Excellency will see his whole scheme of a life academico-philosophical, . . . of a college founded for Indian scholars and missionaries; where he most exorbitantly proposes a whole hundred pounds a year for himself, fifty pounds for a fellow, and ten for a student. His heart will break if his Deanery be not taken from him, and left to your Excellency's disposal. I discouraged him by the coldness of courts and ministers, who will interpret all this as impossible, and a vision; but nothing will do. And, therefore, I humbly entreat your Excellency either to use such persuasions as will keep one of the first men in the kingdom, for learning and virtue, quiet at home, or assist him by your credit to compass his romantic design; which, however, is very noble and generous, and directly proper for a person of your excellent education to encourage."[1]

On reaching London one of the first things that Berkeley did was to publish the "little tract" to which Swift had referred.[2] In order

[1] "Life and Letters of George Berkeley," 102–103.

[2] "A Proposal for the Better Supplying of Churches in our Foreign Plantations, and for Converting the Savage Americans to Christianity, by a College to be erected in the Summer Islands, otherwise called the Isles of Bermuda."—Berkeley's "Works," iii., 213–231.

to raise the endowment necessary for the college therein described, his original purpose probably was to depend on voluntary gifts rather than on an appropriation from the government. Had he steadily adhered to this plan, it is likely that he would have succeeded, and would have saved himself the bitter disappointment that came in after years. No doubt the intellectual indifference of London society at that period, its frivolty, and its sordid spirit, would have been barriers to his immediate success in an appeal for pecuniary aid in such a project as his; yet even those barriers could not long have resisted the magic of his brilliant and contagious earnestness. Several anecdotes have come down to us illustrating the incomparable powers of persuasion with which he prosecuted his undertaking. For example, the famous club of wits, "the Scriblerus Club," met one day for dinner at the house of Lord Bathurst, and before Berkeley came in the members agreed among themselves that they would rally him on his wild scheme of going out to

Bermuda. Lord Bathurst says that they fully carried out their programme; but that "Berkeley having listened to all the lively things they had to say, begged to be heard in his turn; and displayed his plan with such an astonishing and animating force of eloquence and enthusiasm that they were struck dumb, and, after some pause, rose up all together with earnestness, exclaiming, 'Let us all set out with him immediately.'"

He also captivated many other distinguished persons; and he raised by subscription more than five thousand pounds,—a sum which might have been greatly increased had he not been tempted to seek a government appropriation. He even made his way to the ear and the heart of King George the First; and, more difficult still, to the friendly forbearance of Sir Robert Walpole, from whom he got, not only a personal subscription of two hundred pounds, but the promise of not opposing in the House Berkeley's scheme of an appropriation. Besides a charter for his college Berkeley procured the introduction of a bill wherein a suitable portion of the proceeds arising from the sale

of certain lands in the West Indies was to be bestowed upon the college. Evidently Walpole consented to this bill, fully believing that in the nature of things, and without any effort on his part, it would fail of passing the House of Commons. But he did not rightly estimate the energy and the persuasiveness of Berkeley. In May, 1726, the bill was carried through the House, "none having the confidence to speak against it, and not above two giving their negative, which was done in so low a voice as if they themselves were ashamed of it."[1]

Accordingly, Walpole gave to Berkeley a promise of twenty thousand pounds. Thus far all seemed prosperous; but Berkeley had still to learn that it was one thing to get from a statesman like Walpole a promise of twenty thousand pounds, and quite another thing to get the twenty thousand pounds. He was, however, full of hope. He spent the next two years in completing his preparations for going, and especially in waiting for the promised grant. Berkeley's long delay in England began

[1] "Life and Letters," 125.

to be the occasion of a new embarrassment. "Had I continued there," he wrote, "the report would have obtained (which I had found beginning to spread) that I had dropped the design after it had cost me and my friends so much trouble and expense. . . . This obliged me to come away. . . . Nothing less could have convinced the world that I was in earnest."[1] Moreover, Walpole is said to have told him that the grant could not be paid until he had actually made some investment in America for the college.[2]

In this lies the secret of all his subsequent proceedings and of his final failure. He had put his trust in Walpole, who had too much use for money at home, in adapting to members of parliament his favorite methods of political persuasion, for him to be willing to waste twenty thousand pounds in a fantastic educational project in the Bermudas.

Nothing was left for Berkeley but to start, to get to the other side of the Atlantic, and to buy there land enough to constitute an actual

[1] "Berkeley," 133.
[2] "Life and Letters," 153.

investment for the college. He thought it best to go first to New England, and there to await the further proceedings of the prime minister; and his purchase of the farm near Newport and all his long delay there were due to the necessity of deferring to the inclinations of that great officer.

All this it was that gave to his movements an air of mystery, of incertitude, of fickleness; and all this could not at that time be publicly explained. Month after month passed over him in Rhode Island, as he waited for the fulfilment of Walpole's promise. He wrote letters of entreaty, of expostulation. Nothing was done. A whole year passed by. He then wrote to his friend Lord Percival: "I wait here, with all the anxiety that attends suspense, until I know what I can depend upon, and what course I am to take. I must own the disappointments that I have met with have really touched me, not without much affecting my health and spirits. If the founding of a college for the spread of religion and learning in America had been a foolish project, it cannot be supposed the court, the ministers, and the

parliament could have given such encouragement to it; and if, after that encouragement, they who engaged to endow and protect it let it drop, the disappointment indeed may be to me, but the censure I think will light elsewhere."[1] At last came a message from Walpole, which crushed out of him the last spark of hope for the success of his plan. The Bishop of London, who was a friend of Berkeley's, pressed upon Walpole the direct question respecting the payment of the money. "If," said Walpole, "you put this question to me as a minister, I must and can assure you that the money shall most undoubtedly be paid as soon as suits with public convenience; but if you ask me as a friend whether Dean Berkeley should continue in America, expecting the payment of twenty thousand pounds, I advise him by all means to return home to Europe, and to give up his present expectations."[2]

This cruel word drove a dagger into the

[1] "Berkeley," 133. In the latter part of this sentence I have deviated from the text from which I quote, by venturing to correct two obvious typographical errors therein, which make nonsense of the passage.

[2] "Life and Letters of Berkeley," 186.

heart of Berkeley's hopefulness. Even to him it was now obvious that his beautiful project was dead. There was but one thing left for him to do, namely, to bury it, and then to turn to other tasks. After lingering a few months longer in the soothing quiet of his Rhode Island hermitage, Berkeley went back to London. This was in the autumn of 1731. In 1734 he was made Bishop of Cloyne. In 1753 he died.

VI.

Such is the true secret of Berkeley's visit to America,—an incident in his life which was misunderstood and ridiculed at the time, and was in some quarters the occasion of groundless suspicion and of needless alarm. Its real meaning, with what it contained of saintly enthusiasm, and of a wiser than worldly statemanship, is made apparent by being simply and truthfully narrated. The years during which Berkeley was in personal presence upon these shores will be forever ennobled in our annals by that splendid and gracious memory.

Although Berkeley returned from his Ameri-

can visit, he never recovered from it. He was a changed man ever afterwards. With the shattering of that gorgeous and eager dream of his against the rough touch of reality, something of the bloom of being went from him,—something, too, of his old elasticity in hope and joy; and in their place came the sadness of a riper wisdom, and the sweetness of having drunk of a bitter cup. And if in him and his family and his best writings one can trace the effects of his contact with America, so still, in a hundred benignant ways, one can trace in America the effects of its contact with him.

But few written memorials remain of Berkeley's preaching anywhere; but by far the larger number of these memorials are the rough notes made for sermons preached by him in America.[1] In looking over these jagged memoranda, one cannot help reading between the lines Berkeley's own criticism, always acute and delicate, and sometimes almost satirical, upon the tone of life and thought in New England in the first half of the eighteenth

[1] These are published in the volume of "Life and Letters of Berkeley," 629—649.

century; upon its prevailing dissent from the Anglican Church; upon the discordance and the pettiness of its sectarian divisions; upon its Puritanic moroseness; upon the incipient stages of that reaction which took place somewhat later in New England, from believing too much to believing too little; upon the duties of Christian masters in a relation of religious responsibility to their slaves; and especially upon the vices peculiar to a people distinguished for sobriety. The population of Newport, at the time of Berkeley's residence there, was probably even more variegated in religious opinions than were other towns in America. It consisted, as Berkeley wrote, "of many sorts and subdivisions of sects. Here are four sorts of Anabaptists, besides Presbyterians, Quakers, Independents, and many of no profession at all," not to mention Moravians, Jews, and several other religious bodies which, doubtless, Berkeley had not then heard of as being here. "They all agree," he adds, "in one point, that the Church of England is the second-best."[1]

[1] "Life and Letters," 160.

And yet the manly, reasonable, and conciliatory way in which Berkeley met all these people, mottled as they were with their manifold badges of disagreement, won for him among them great liking and respect. "All sects," we are told, "rushed to hear him; even the Quakers with their broad-brimmed hats came and stood in the aisles."[1] Evidently Berkeley found as much interest in studying them, as they found in studying him; and, observing the several topics discussed by him in the sermons which he preached there, we can see how wisely, how frankly, with how catholic and gentle a fidelity, he adjusted his teaching to their spiritual and intellectual needs:

"Divisions into essentials and circumstantials in religion. Circumstantials of less value (1) from the nature of things; (2) from their being left undefined; (3) from the concession of our Church, which is foully misrepresented."[2]

"Sad that religion, which requires us to love, should become the cause of our hating one another. But it is not religion, it is," etc.

[1] "Life and Letters," 160.
[2] *Ibid.*, 632.

"Joy in the Holy Ghost, not sullen, sour, morose, joyless, but rejoicing."

"Since we have so great things in view, let us overlook petty differences; let us look up to God our common Father; let us bear one another's infirmities; instead of quarrelling about those things wherein we differ, let us practise those things wherein we agree."[1]

Two of the most notable of his American sermons are significant of his penetrating study into the characteristic vices of a community neither sensual nor frivolous,—vices born of the ungenerous activity of a legion of unbridled tongues.[2] These sermons furnish us with examples of his aptitude for social criticism,—criticism so finely edged as to culminate into something like satire. "Vices, like weeds, different in different countries; national vice familiar; intemperate lust in Italy; drinking in Germany; tares wherever there is good seed; though not sensual, not less deadly; *e. g.*, detraction: would not steal sixpence, but rob a man of his reputation; they who have no rel-

[1] "Life and Letters," 633.
[2] *Ibid.*, 645–648.

ish for wine have itching ears for scandal; this vice often observed in sober people; praise and blame natural justice; where we know a man lives in habitual sin unrepented, we may prevent hypocrites from doing evil; but to judge without inquiry, to show a facility in believing and a readiness to report evil of one's neighbor; frequency, little horror, great guilt.'" Satan "tempts men to sensuality, but he is in his own nature malicious and malignant; pride and ill-nature, two vices most severely rebuked by our Saviour. All deviations sinful, but those upon dry purpose more so; malignity of spirit like an ulcer in the nobler parts; . . . age cures sensual vices, this grows with age; . . . more to be guarded against because less scandalous; imposing on others and even on themselves as religion and a zeal for God's service, when it really proceeds only from illwill to man, and is no part of our duty to God, but directly contrary to it."[2]

These passages from Berkeley's sermons are probably enough to indicate for that branch of

[1] "Life and Letters," 646.
[2] *Ibid.*, 647–648.

his writings the reaction upon his mind of his American visit. But in his more elaborate compositions, especially in "Alciphron" and in "Siris," the tokens of this reaction are far more distinct and impressive. Indeed, the former of these works, as it was begun and ended in America, so is it pervaded by allusions to his life in America,—to his home there, to his seaside study, to the beautiful scenery about him, to the notable traits and customs of the people in the neighborhood, to his own daily employments, to the friends who visited him or whom he visited, and especially to the great and bitter disappointment which had overtaken him on these shores. The writing of "Alciphron" was a wholesome diversion of his mind from the grief caused by that disappointment; and its first sentences are a tender and manly acknowledgment of the grief from which his new literary task was to enable him in some measure to work himself free: "I flattered myself, Theages, that before this time I might have been able to have sent you an agreeable account of the success of the affair which brought me into this remote corner of the country. But instead of this, I should

now give you the detail of its miscarriage, if I did not rather choose to entertain you with some amusing incidents, which have helped to make me easy under a circumstance I could neither obviate nor foresee. Events are not in our power, but it always is to make a good use even of the very worst. And, I must needs own, the course and event of this affair gave opportunity for reflections that make me some amends for a great loss of time, pains, and expense. A life of action, which takes its issue from the counsels, passions, and views of other men, if it doth not draw a man to imitate, will at least teach him to observe. And a mind at liberty to reflect on its own observations, if it produce nothing useful to the world, seldom fails of entertainment to itself. For several months past I have enjoyed such liberty and leisure in this distant retreat, far beyond the verge of that great whirlpool of business, faction, and pleasure, which is called the world."[1]

In 1744, thirteen years after his return from America, Berkeley published his wonderful lit-

[1] Berkeley's "Works," ii., 23–24.

tle treatise, entitled "Siris: A Chain of Philosophical Reflections and Enquiries concerning the Virtues of Tar-Water, and Divers other Subjects Connected together and Arising one from Another."[1] "On the whole," says the latest editor of Berkeley's writings, "the scanty speculative literature of these islands in the last century contains no other work nearly so remarkable. . . . There is the unexpectedness of genius in its whole movement. It breathes the spirit of Plato and the Neoplatonists, in the least Platonic generation of English history since the revival of letters; and it draws this Platonic spirit from a thing so commonplace as Tar. It connects Tar with the highest thoughts in metaphysics and theology, by links which involve some of the most subtle, botanical, chemical, physiological, optical, and mechanical speculations of its time. Its immediate aim is to confirm rationally the benevolent conjecture that Tar yields a 'water of health' fitted to remove, or, at least, to mitigate, all the diseases of our organism in this mortal state, and to convey fresh supplies of the very

[1] Berkeley's "Works," ii., 341–508.

vital essence itself into the animal creation. Its successive links of physical science are gradually connected, first, with the ancient and modern literature of the philosophy of fire, and, next, with the meditations of the greatest of the ancients, about the substantial and casual dependence of the universe upon conscious mind."[1]

Berkeley's confidence in the medicinal efficacy of tar-water thus became the master enthusiasm of the last twelve years of his life; and, as usual, the enthusiasm which he himself felt upon the subject he succeeded in communicating to the public. His book rose into instant celebrity. It ran through several editions in England. Translations of it into French, Dutch, German, Portuguese, were published on the continent. Tar-water "became the rage in England as well as in Ireland. Manufactories of Tar-Water were established in London, Dublin, and other places in the course of the summer. The anger of the professional physicians was aroused against the ecclesiastical intruder into their province.

[1] Berkeley's "Works," ii., 343–344.

Pamphlets were written against the new medicine, and other pamphlets were written in reply. A Tar-Water controversy ensued. The infection spread to other countries. Tar-Water establishments were set agoing in various parts of Europe and America."[1] Now, all this was another of the effects upon him and upon his whole after-life produced by his American visit; for it was in America, and among the Narragansett Indians, that he had first learned of the invigorating and curative properties of tar.

VII.

There can be little doubt that when, in 1731, Dean Berkeley took ship in Boston harbor, and sailed out into the sea for England, he felt that his visit to America had been a failure, and that he was returning home a baffled man,—the golden hope of his life blighted. What gladness it would have brought to him could he but have had a glimpse into the far future, and could have seen how all along its unfolding

[1] "Life and Letters," 294.

centuries that seemingly baffled visit of his was to keep on bearing fruit in the innumerable benign effects it was to have upon civilization in the New World,—upon the establishment of universities here; upon the cultivation of all liberal studies; upon the improvement of society in morals and in manners; upon the upbuilding of the institutions of religion. He had not, indeed, accomplished the immediate object of his expedition—the founding of an American university in the Bermuda Islands; but, by methods different from those intended by him, and in ways more manifold than even he could have dreamed of, he has since accomplished, and through all coming time, by a thousand ineffaceable influences, he will continue to accomplish, some portion at least of the results —the beneficent, beautiful, superb results— which he had aimed at by the founding of his university. It is the old story over again—the tragedy of a Providence wiser than man's foresight, God giving the victory to His faithful servant, even through the bitterness of overruling him and defeating him.

To trace with proper fulness of detail the

direct and indirect effects which Berkeley's sojourn in America has wrought upon the intellectual life of this country, in philosophy, in literature, in learning, in the spirit and method of higher education, would require a more extended presentation than can here be given to it. A mere grouping of hints is all that will now be attempted.

Of course, in those days of difficult and dangerous ocean-travel, when the spectacle of a distinguished European visitor in America was, even more than is now the case, something to awaken awe in the American mind, it was an immediate and an immense intellectual stimulus to have as an actual visitor among us for two or three years a ripe European scholar, of great genius, of exquisite accomplishments, of noble ideals, of fascinating gifts in expression. Naturally the cultivated society of Newport was the first to feel the intellectual effect of his visit; and from it sprang the philosophical society of that town, and ultimately the Redwood Library,—an institution at once the parent and the model of many others in America, and still prosperous

and useful now in the second century of its existence.[1]

Then, too, there soon began to come to Berkeley, in his new home, various American pilgrims to seek his counsel,—men of letters, like John Adams, the poet; and men of science, like Samuel Johnson, the metaphysician and the founder of Columbia College; all of whom seem to have found inspiration and guidance in the great man's brotherly and brilliant words. Johnson, indeed, became Berkeley's disciple in philosophy; and for many years afterward, in his books, in his sermons, in his academical lectures, he kept alight and he held aloft in this land, the torch of Berkeley's radiant and consoling idea.[2] Moreover, during those years of Berkeley's sojourn in Rhode Island there was in a frontier western parish in Massachusetts a young theologian trained only in a small colonial college, already beginning to droop under the burdens of poverty, of public care, and of ill-health, but

[1] W. Updike, "Memoirs of the R. I. Bar," 61–62; "Public Libraries of the U. S.," Part I., 15–16.

[2] E. E. Beardsley, "Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson," 67, 70, 75, 77, 82, 131, 132, 169.

endowed with a philosophical genius not unworthy to be matched with that of Berkeley himself. We have no evidence that Jonathan Edwards ever made the rugged journey from Northampton to Newport to see George Berkeley; but the Northampton pastor had already, several years before, worked his way, perhaps by an independent process, to Berkeley's very doctrine; and it can hardly be doubted that the celebrity of Berkeley's visit here, and the keen attention to his philosophy which his visit awakened among thoughtful New Englanders, were felt as a boon of intellectual sympathy by that lonely student in the wilds of Western Massachusetts, and may have helped somewhat to strengthen him for his service as a "defender of Berkeley's great philosophical conception in its application to the material world."[1]

Undoubtedly the great influence of Berkeley on the intellectual life of this country is seen most conspicuously in the stimulus which he gave to higher education here. The mere fact

[1] "Life and Correspondence of George Berkeley," 182; George P. Fisher, "Discussions in History and Philosophy," 229–234. See, also, the author's "History of American Literature," ii., 182–183.

that such a man as Berkeley, with such inducements as he had to remain in his place at home, had been willing to give up time, and wealth, and chosen studies, and official advancement, and the charms of an ancient society, and had brought hither across the sea into the wilderness nearly all that was sacred and precious to him in the world, and that he here stood ready, year after year, to devote his life, his genius, all his energies, to the promotion of higher education in America, was itself a dramatic demonstration at least of his own sense of the vast importance to America of higher education. Though he did not succeed, in his own person, in founding an American college, that spectacle of his noble failure to found one stands for all time in its pathos, bearing witness to an imperishable and an unsurpassable duty.

Moreover, almost as soon as Berkeley touched land, he began to give out sympathy and counsel and help to the men who were already working in American colleges, or who were working for them. It did not hinder him that the colleges nearest to him were under the control of

dissenters from his church; and yet, even in his purpose to befriend these colleges he found himself the object of some ecclesiastical suspicion. "Pray let me know," he wrote to Samuel Johnson in March, 1730, "whether they would admit the writings of Hooker and Chillingworth into the library of the college in New Haven."[1] Two years afterward, when Berkeley had returned to England, and had sent thence to Yale College a munificent gift of books, a famous Boston preacher, Benjamin Colman, wrote to the president of the college urging that the gift be not accepted, if it be "clogged with any conditions that directly or indirectly tend to the introduction of Episcopacy."[2]

But tokens of suspicion like these—not unnatural under the circumstances—did not chill the flow of Berkeley's kind feeling toward the New England colleges, or his desire to help them. When he was upon the point of embarking for England he sent to Johnson some Greek and Latin books, to be given, if it should seem best, to Yale College; and he accompa-

[1] "Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson," 75.
[2] E. Turell, "Life of Benjamin Colman," 59–61.

nied the gift by the promise of still trying to help, even after his return to the Old World, the cause of education in America. "My endeavors shall not be wanting, some way or other, to be useful, and I should be very glad to be so in particular to the college at New Haven."[1] This promise was not forgotten. In less than a year after his departure he transmitted to the president of Yale College a deed[2] conveying to that institution his farm in Rhode Island; "the yearly rents and profits" from which were to be spent, not only for the purchase of books in Greek and Latin, as prizes for proficiency in those languages, but also as scholarships for the maintenance of three Bachelors who should be selected for their excellence in Latin and Greek, and should reside in the college in graduate studies for three years. It would be hard to enumerate all the effects of this gift in stimulating classical culture in this country. This single fact may be mentioned, however, that in the long roll kept by Yale College, of Berkeleyan "scholars of the house," from 1733 to the present, one finds

[1] "Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson," 78.

[2] Given in full in "Life and Letters of Berkeley," 193–194, note.

many names that have become distinguished for classical learning, for literary talent, and especially for service in the higher educational work of the country: Eleazer Wheelock, the founder and first President of Dartmouth College; Aaron Burr, President of Princeton College; William Samuel Johnson, President of Columbia College; Naphtali Daggett and Timothy Dwight, Presidents of Yale College; Abraham Baldwin, founder and President of the University of Georgia; Samuel Austin, President of the University of Vermont; Jeremiah Atwater, President of Middlebury and Dickinson Colleges; Sereno Edwards Dwight, President of Hamilton College; Joel Jones, first President of Girard College; Edward Beecher, President of Illinois College; besides jurists, statesmen, scholars, and writers, like Jared Ingersoll, James Abraham Hillhouse, Silas Deane, John Trumbull, Joseph Buckminster, Abiel Holmes, James Murdock, Norman Pinney, William Moseley Holland, Charles Astor Bristed, and Eugene Schuyler.[1]

[1] A full list of the Berkeleyan scholars at Yale from 1733 to 1851 is given in "The Yale Literary Magazine," for Feb., 1852, 152–154; and to 1865, in "Papers of N. H. Coll. Hist. Soc.," i., 157–160.

In 1733, the year following that of his gift of land to Yale College, Berkeley proved his undiminished remembrance of the struggling young colleges in America by sending over both to Yale and to Harvard valuable presents of books. The collection which he thus gave to Yale College was the larger one of the two. It consisted of about a thousand volumes, and included well-chosen works in Greek and Latin literature, in the Fathers, in church history, in divinity, in philosophy, in mathematics, in medicine and natural history, in English and French literature—altogether, according to an early historian of Yale, "the best collection of books which had ever been brought at one time to America."[1]

Perhaps it may be said, also, that his help to higher education in America was quite as effective in the form of sympathy and good counsel as it was in that of good gifts. To the very end of his life he kept up his correspon-

[1] President Clap, cited in "Life and Letters of George Berkeley," 194. A copy of the invoice of the books sent by Berkeley to Yale College has been published by President Daniel C. Gilman, in "Papers of New Haven Col. Historical Society," i., 147–170.

dence with America, and even handed down to his widow and to his children a legacy of American friendships; and in nearly all his letters sent hither there breathes the same glowing and affectionate zeal for the cause of good letters in America, and, through that, of noble thinking and of noble living, to be promoted by the young colleges of the New World. So long as he lived, tidings were regularly sent to him from Yale College respecting the progress of learning there, particularly under the impulse given by his endowment. In 1750 he writes: "I find also by a letter from Mr. Clap that learning continues to make notable advances in Yale College. This gives me great satisfaction."[1] In 1751 he writes: "I am glad to find by Mr. Clap's letter, and the specimens of literature enclosed in his packet, that learning continues to make a progress in Yale College, and hope that virtue and Christian charity may keep pace with it."[2] In the same year he writes to President Clap himself: "The daily increase

[1] "Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson," 170.
[2] *Ibid.*, 171.

of religion and learning in your seminary of Yale College gives me very sensible pleasure, and an ample recompense for my poor endeavors to further these good ends."[1] And when, but a few years before his death, his advice was asked by Samuel Johnson, respecting plans for a college at New York, he wrote back a letter of wise and faithful counsel, which did much to mould the organization both of King's College[2] and of the College of Philadelphia.[3]

Indeed, as respects King's College, we have documentary evidence that it was formed by its first trustees explicitly and consciously upon the model thus conveyed to them, through Samuel Johnson, from Bishop Berkeley.[4] This fact has not been sufficiently known. The true spiritual founder of Columbia College was George Berkeley. To one who loves the memory of that wise and saintly prelate, and who has been touched by the grief he suffered over the apparent discomfiture of his

[1] "Life and Letters of George Berkeley," 327.
[2] Now Columbia College.
[3] Now the University of Pennsylvania.
[4] "Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson," 154–155; 170.

hope of founding "a college for the spread of religion and learning in America," it must give pleasure to learn that before he passed away from this earth he had the assurance that the college at New York was to be founded upon the model furnished by him. So that, after all, a part of the beautiful dream of Berkeley's life was granted to him, and in a way wiser than he had thought. Not, indeed, in the Bermuda Islands,—which would have been too remote and too isolated a spot for a great American university,—but in the very heart of the future metropolis of the New World; not, indeed, by the labor of his own hand, and yet according to the express directions of his most mature judgment; not, indeed, under his own presidency, and yet under the presidency of his most beloved American friend and of his most devoted American disciple, was Berkeley finally permitted to establish a college for "the promotion of Christian civilization alike in the English and in the heathen parts of America." And there can be little doubt that from the first the college should have been named for

Berkeley rather than for the king. And, without any doubt, when, just after the Revolutionary war, the original royalist name of the college was necessarily dropped, and a new name was sought for, nothing could have been more appropriate than that the college should then have received the beautiful and significant name of Berkeley.

But though Berkeley's own college in America has not been called by his name, Berkeley's effort for "the spread of religion and learning in America" has not been without many tokens of commemoration among us. In the college at New Haven, of which he was so generous a benefactor, his name is woven into imperishable association with the noblest and the most stimulating studies; while from a memorial window in its chapel that name beams like a benediction upon all who, like him, would unite sincere piety with sincere love of truth. In the oldest college-town in America a street has been named in honor of Berkeley, by an eminent writer[1] who was devoted to the studies which Berkeley loved, and to the higher interests of society of which Berkeley was the champion. In the cities of New York and Providence, in recent years, institutions for the best secondary education have been named in memory of Berkeley, as "a missionary who crossed the seas to bring to this land the torch of knowledge."[1] And far away upon the western verge of this continent—a continent which Berkeley believed to be the predestined seat of the last and most glorious act in the drama of Man's History upon Earth,—over against the very gleam of the Golden Gate of San Francisco, and almost within sound of the surf crashing upon the sands of the Pacific, a great state has founded a great university; and, while it has given its own name to the university, it has bestowed upon the university-town the name of Berkeley, in remembrance of "one of the very best of the early friends of college education in America." At Trinity College, in Hartford,—a college that was founded and has been faithfully reared in the very spirit of Berkeley's ideas upon education,—the president, at the annual

[1] Richard H. Dana, the second.

[1] The name was given to the first of these schools by President Gilman, of Johns Hopkins University, whose words I quote above.

commencement, sits in the chair in which Berkeley used to sit at Newport, in which Berkeley is believed to have written his "Alciphron," and from which Berkeley must have dreamed many a dream and prayed many a prayer "for the spread of religion and learning in America." Finally, at Middleton has been planted "The Berkeley Divinity School," with the purpose that it should be for many years a monument—and something more productive than a monument—to the sacred and dear memory of that apostolic scholar, who, in an age of sensualists and of self-seekers, gave up all earthly pleasures and gains, and came forth over the sea, that he might found in America a college to train up young men worthily for the service both of religion and of civil society in this New World.

VIII.

Ever since the time when the English settlements in America became large enough to provide for European visitors, and complex enough to tempt them hither, we have had among us an almost unbroken procession of such visitors,

—eminent, condescending, beneficent, and otherwise,—including personages so dissimilar as Peter Kalm, Wesley, Whitefield, Lafayette, Chastellux, Brissot de Warville, Talleyrand, Volney, Louis Philippe, Thomas Moore, Francis Jeffrey, Basil Hall, Mrs. Trollope, the Duke of Wurtemberg, the Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, Tocqueville, Charles Lyell, George Combe, George Thompson, Harriet Martineau, Fredrika Bremer, Lakieren, Arfvedsen, Charles Dickens, Friedrich von Raumer, Macready, Jenny Lind, Kossuth, Thackeray, Kohl, the Prince of Wales, Kingsley, Goldwin Smith, Matthew Arnold, Froude, Irving, Bernhardt, James Bryce. The visitors who have thus taken the trouble to come this way, have done so, apparently, for reasons too various to be here adequately described,—to find a temporary rest or refuge among us, to fight for us, to preach to us, to investigate us, to instruct us, to amuse themselves with us, to sing to us, to play to us, to give us needed advice, to write books about us, to hold us up as frightful examples, and perchance, not seldom, to relieve us of the burden of those redundant dollars with which our land flows as

with milk and honey. At the head of this vast and variegated procession of European visitors —at the head of it, certainly, in the order of time, and not far from the head of it in the order of unselfish and benign intention—walks, and will forever walk, the form of George Berkeley.

Moreover, who of European men was in advance of this man in the avowal of a large and gracious vision of the significance for all the world of the new social structures which men were then building in this part of the world, and of the incalculable importance of their building those structures aright?

Can there be much doubt, also, that in his conception of the place and part of the New World in the development of human happiness everywhere, he did at first overestimate its innocence—transferring, perhaps, to the infancy of society here those moral conditions, that purity and sweetness, which are characteristic of infancy in the individual—almost identifying a geographical transmigration with a moral and a spiritual one—forgetting for a while some choice and ancient testimony as to the persistence of personal character even under a change of skies? For is it not probable that at the very time when George Berkeley, in his first contact with real life, was standing aghast at the ineffable corruption of society in Europe and was planning a scheme by which to avert such corruption from society in America, already society in America was, in proportion to its materials and to its opportunities, just as corrupt?

At any rate, in view of Berkeley's most generous thought of us,—above all, in view of his supposition that the New World might be saved from the profligacy—political, commercial, social, and individual,—with which the Old World was then reeking, there should be for us much food for meditation in the fact of the existence among us, at the present moment, of all such profligacy. What, then, was Berkeley's scheme for the prevention or the cure of the moral diseases of society? And was it, indeed, a scheme largely visionary and delusive? On the contrary, was it not then, and is it not still, the only true or possible scheme for the prevention or the cure of such diseases

here or anywhere? In one word, it was education! Yes, but what sort of education? An education of the whole man, or of only a part of him? For, if it be the latter—an education of the intellect only, or of the intellect and the body only—then, according to Berkeley, we have no guarantee that education will result in virtue, or will avert crime; since, in his belief, such education is but the training of a personal power which may almost as likely be spent for the moral injury of society, as for its moral benefit.

Nevertheless, it is, upon the whole, just this one sided and amorphous education—this culture of the intellect and of the body, without that of the conscience— that we in America have been for a long time supporting and adoring, as the one sure and omnipotent means of saving the commonwealth from rottenness—political, commercial, social, individual. But, lo! the commonwealth has not been saved from rottenness—nor will it ever be, in that fashion! The scheme which Berkeley proposed a hundred and sixty years ago for preventing the moral diseases of society here was, indeed,

education, but it was complete education,—education of all the faculties and forces of a man, rather than of a part of them: his formula was—"religion and learning." Our failure thus far to prevent corruption from fastening upon the vitals of American society does no discredit to Berkeley's plan, but to our use of it. Such education as that attempted by the training now so generally given in the schools of America, can have but the result which Berkeley foresaw, and which one[1] of the wisest of our living leaders has lately pointed out,—that of producing a race of men and women "less concerned about virtue than about knowledge, not as good as they are sharp, not as pure, truthful, and temperate as they are smart, rather knowing than wise, and quickwitted than trustworthy." "He who opens a school," said Victor Hugo, "closes a prison." But does it so? Much depends on the sort of school one opens. Far wiser, even if not so epigrammatic, was that English statesman who, a few years ago, gave public warning to his countrymen, that "if they educated the intellect of the nation without the

[1] F. D. Huntington.

conscience, they would only prepare accomplished villains to pick the locks and break into the treasure-houses of civil society." Let us not then do Berkeley the injustice of forgetting that his plan for averting corruption from American society, namely, by the education of the individuals who should compose American society, clearly meant education of the moral and spiritual natures of men as well as of their intellectual and their physical nature. If we, in this bold young land which Berkeley loved, and which he wanted to save from corruption, have nevertheless advanced into forms of corruption as gross and as appalling as those that have been known in any country, in any age, the fault has been not in his plan, but in our partial, shallow, and most inadequate rendering of it.

II.

A GREAT COLLEGE PRESIDENT AND WHAT HE WROTE.

II.

A GREAT COLLEGE PRESIDENT AND WHAT HE WROTE.

I—Outline of Timothy Dwight's life—His precocity in learning and aspiration—His career as a student at Yale—His excesses in self-discipline.

II—His great influence as a tutor at Yale—At nineteen begins the writing of an epic poem—Chaplain in the army of the Revolution—A writer of patriotic songs—His song of "Columbia."

III—Retires from the army in 1778—Farmer, legislator, pastor—His "Conquest of Canaan," in 1785—Contemporary English criticism of it—William Cowper.

IV—His attempt at satire in "The Triumph of Infidelity," in 1788.

V—His best poem, "Greenfield Hill," 1794.

VI—His minor poems—The quality and power of his personality as an explanation of his vast contemporary influence—His varied and minute knowledge—His intellectual interests and sympathies—His life the triumph of a sufferer—His extraordinary command over his own mental possessions—Composed by dictation—The defects of his literary work.

VII—His career culminates in the presidency of Yale at the age of forty-three—The range of his labors there—His ascendancy.

VIII—His pre-eminence as a champion of Christianity—His

brilliancy in conversation—His services as a preacher—"Theology Explained and Defended"—His discourse on Washington.

IX—His "Travels in New England and New York"—Its merits and defects.

X—His intellectual activity during the last two years of his life—"Remarks on the Review of Inchiquin's Letters"—Other writings then executed or planned.

I.

TIMOTHY DWIGHT,[1] a grandson of Jonathan Edwards, and himself illustrious as a theologian, teacher, writer, orator, man of affairs, was born at Northampton, Massachusetts, on the fourteenth of May, 1752. He was graduated at Yale College in 1769. During the subsequent two years, he taught in a grammar school in New Haven. From 1771 to 1777, he was a tutor in Yale College. From

[1] For the biographical facts about Timothy Dwight, the chief sources are, "Memoir of the Life of President Dwight," prefixed to the four volumes of Dwight's "Theology," and, though anonymous, known to be the work of his two sons, William T. and Sereno E. Dwight; "The Life of Timothy Dwight," by William B. Sprague, forming a part of volume iv. of the second series of "The Library of American Biography," conducted by Jared Sparks; and the sketch of Dwight, with most interesting letters of reminiscence by some of his eminent pupils, in the second volume of Sprague's "Annals of the American Pulpit."

the autumn of that year until the autumn of the year following, he acted as chaplain in the American army. From 1778 to 1783, he lived at the paternal home in Northampton, working upon the farm, preaching the gospel, and for two terms serving as a member of the legislature of Massachusetts. From November, 1783, to September, 1795, he was pastor of the Congregational Church at Greenfield, Connecticut. At the date last mentioned, he entered upon the presidency of Yale College, in which office he died on the eleventh of January, 1817.

These nude statistics give us the exterior framework of a life, not uncommonly long, almost never exempt from severe bodily pain, but pervaded throughout by singular activity, power, and productiveness, and challenging the public admiration, then and since then, by its breadth, versatility, and robust sense; its brilliance, its purity, its dignity of tone, its moral aggressiveness, its many-sided and benign achievement.

Almost as soon as he was able to speak, he had begun to receive regular instruction in books. He had learned the alphabet at a single

lesson. Before he was four years old, he had learned to read the Bible easily and correctly. While still a small boy and listening to the talk which he often heard in his father's house, concerning the famous men of the world, he "formed a settled resolution . . . to equal those whose talents and character he had heard so highly extolled."[1] Thenceforward to his last breath, the most persistent trait of this person seems to be a note of aspiration,—a tireless energy of purpose to be great. At six years of age, he began to attend the grammar-school; and as his father thought him still too young to study Latin, he used to forage among the books of his school-mates while they were at play, and thus feloniously he learned the whole of Lily's "Grammar." When at last his father's consent was obtained, he wrought at Latin and Greek with so much fierceness that he would have been quite ready, when only eight years old, for the freshman class at Yale College, had it not been for the sudden break-up of the grammar-school, and his fortunate return to his mother, who at once proceeded to

[1] "Memoir," in Dwight's "Theology," i., 6.

appease his frenzy for knowledge, by a diversion into the fields of history and geography. From that time, for several years, he was engaged in devouring Salmon's "Geographical and Historical Grammar," also the historical parts of the Bible, likewise such unfrivolous books as Josephus, Prideaux, Rollin, Hooke, and the principal histories of the modern world, especially of England and the English Colonies. When eleven years old, he resumed the study of Latin and Greek; and in September, 1765, he entered Yale College, being then thirteen years old, and already familiar with the classic authors read there during the freshman and sophomore years.

By this redundance of erudition, he seems to have been beguiled for a time into some lapses toward juvenile light-mindedness. What with card-playing, late suppers, an occasional fever, an accidental poisoning, a broken arm, and other academic amusements, our hero succeeded in disposing all too rapidly of the first two years of his career as an undergraduate. At the beginning of his junior year, goaded by remorse, he roused himself against every

form of self-indulgence in the future; and he kept to the high level of his purpose, with an austerity of which one now reads with a feeling something like humiliation and fatigue.

In those days, the ancient superstition touching the peculiar virtue of early-rising was still rampant at the college. The students were, indeed, not required to be at their morning devotions in the chapel earlier than half-past five o'clock in winter, or than half-past four in summer; but young Dwight, unable to sanction by his example the sluggish habits thus engendered, proudly betook himself from bed every morning in time to read and construe, before chapel, a hundred lines of Homer. Moreover, no day could at all justify itself in his eyes, unless it had yielded to him fourteen hours for close study. When he came to be a tutor at the college, his demands upon himself grew still more strict. Covetous of time, he determined to avoid all waste of it through so base a thing as bodily exercise, by extinguishing the need of bodily exercise; and this he expected to accomplish by gradually lessening the quantity of his food. His success was very striking.

He so far reduced his diet that he was able to dine on just twelve mouthfuls. That, of course, was his most luxurious meal; but for breakfast and supper he deemed it his duty to be less abandoned to gluttony. Just how many mouthfuls he permitted to himself at those minor repasts, history does not record. However, having continued for about six months this system of diet, he was still unsatisfied with himself; he felt "less clearness of apprehension than was desirable"; and suspecting that the effect complained of might be due to the animal food which had thus far been a part of his daily regimen, he resolved thenceforth to confine himself to a vegetable diet, but without any increase in the number of mouthfuls allotted to each meal. By the summer of 1774, he had so far prospered in his hygienic experiments, that he had nineteen hard attacks of bilous colic in the course of two months. Being by that time reduced nearly to a skeleton, and having scarcely strength enough left to raise his head from the pillow, his father was summoned, and with the greatest difficulty took him home to Northampton, apparently to die.

To die at that time, however, he was not. In consequence of certain perspicuous remarks addressed to him by his physician touching the fatuity of his recent proceedings, the young gentleman was induced to submit himself to proper food, to rest, and finally to exercise in the open air; and after a time he was restored to the posession of his vigorous constitution,—though with a retributive legacy of weakness in the eyes, and of excruciating pain in the part of the head just back of the eyes, from which he never afterward found relief.

II.

With the recovery of his lost health, he was soon back again at his work in the college, where his extraordinary success as a guide and an inspirer of young men had already made a sort of epoch in the history of the place. For English literature he had an inextinguishable passion, which he was able in some measure to communicate to his pupils and to his associates,—thereby doing much to give to the college and even to the town that notable impulse toward literary cultivation, and toward literary productiveness, which characterized both town and college during the remainder of his life. Along with his passion for English literature went, as a matter of course, an invincible passion to distinguish himself in it; and it accords with every trait of the man that, for the purpose of winning such distinction, he should very early have chosen for himself the most arduous and the most majestic form of literary expression,—that of the epic. In 1771, being then nineteen years of age, he had celebrated his entrance upon his tutorship at Yale by entering likewise upon the composition of an heroic poem, in eleven books, entitled "The Conquest of Canaan", which he virtually finished during the subsequent three years.[1]

[1] In his "Poets and Poetry of America" 14, Griswold attributes to Timothy Dwight "America, A Poem," as published in 1772 and as "in the style of Pope's 'Windsor Forest.'" No mention of such poem was made by Kettell in his account of Dwight published thirteen years before this book of Griswold's. ("Specimens of American Poetry" i. 223–259.) Griswold's statement, however, has since been followed, apparently upon trust, by such compilers as Allibone, Sabin, and the author of the sketch of Dwight in "Appleton's Cyclopædia of American Biography." In my own researches, I have never been able to come across a poem exactly corresponding to the one mentioned by Griswold,—the nearest approach to it being a very rare

Early in October, 1777, he threw himself with great energy into the service of the country as a chaplain in the army, his immediate duty being with Parsons's Brigade, then posted near Peekskill on the Hudson. Dropping the shyness of an academic recluse, he quickly caught the ways of the camp, and the spirit of men who were set apart to a vocation not at all contemplative. The hopes and the fears for which those men then stood in arms, he well knew, and could utter for them in prompt, energetic, and splendid speech. He seems not to have been disconcerted by the lack of ecclesiastical environment. Standing on the grass, with a pile of regimental drums before him for a pulpit, he harangued his embattled farmers in

small quarto of about a dozen pages, for the sight of which I was indebted to my friend, Mr. James L. Whitney of the Public Library of Boston. It is entitled "America, or, A Poem on the Settlement of the British Colonies; addressed to the Friends of Freedom and their Country. By a Gentleman Educated at Yale College." It was printed at New Haven, but without date; and is not at all in the style of Pope's "Windsor Forest." From the Library of Yale College—the very shrine of St. Timothy—Mr. Addison Van Name writes: "We do not know the author of 'America,' and have no copy of the poem." I suspect that in attributing it to Timothy Dwight, Griswold was merely putting a guess into an affirmation.

words and tones which carried to their hearts thrilling inspiration, and strengthened them for such rough business as might happen to lie before them. A somewhat uncertain tradition declares that in the midst of the general excitement connected with Burgoyne's invasion, he preached a sermon of wonderful power, on this significant text from Joel ii. 20,—"But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savor shall come up, because he hath done great things." This sermon is said to have been printed, and to have done duty afterward by many a camp fire: in one case, being read to a garrison that was closely beleaguered and in desperate danger, it so quickened the men with its great passion of patriotism, its faith, its courage, that they "resolved to hold out to the last extremity, and made the sally in which they routed and drove off their besiegers."[1]

[1] Johnston, "Yale and Her Honor-Roll in the American Revolution," 258; Goodrich, "Recollections," etc., i. 351

Not alone as a preacher, but as a song-writer also, did the flame of his patriotism, in those grim days, warm and set on fire the hearts of many struggling men, bucolic warriors, they were,—heroes half-equipped, tattered, hungry, then and there in much stress and danger for an idea on behalf of which the best of men have been glad to live or die. His biographers tell us that this indomitable chaplain then "wrote several patriotic songs which were universally popular,"[1] and stirred the soldiers to that sort of enthusiasm for an ideal good in this life,—for an object above mere pelf and self,—out of which alone really great deeds come. Only one of these war-songs, his famous "Columbia," seems to have lived beyond the occasion from which it sprang; and very

note. The sermon above referred to, I have never found. The details given by the unhesitant and ever-gushing Goodrich, as from "the venerable Colonel Platt," may possibly be true in substance, though certainly not true as to matters of place and time. On the occasion of the news of Cornwallis's surrender, Dwight preached a sermon at Northampton; and this was printed at Hartford. I found a copy of it at the Congregational Library in Boston, in a bundle labelled "Patriotic Sermons Previous to 1800."

[1] "Memoir" in "Theology," i., 13.

likely, to those who now read it as a detached text, and who do not re-create for themselves the very scene, the atmosphere, the needs, the moods, from the midst of which this song came into life, it will be but ponderous and humdrum verse. Of course winged words these are not, and were not; and yet so true was this song to the very heart of its time that, up and above the hail and smoke and curses of the battle-field, it really lifted the hearts of men who were just then overburdened by a dreadful task, who were just then bewildered in the dust and cries of the fighting, and begrimed with its soilure and blood; and it actually gave to them, for some great moments, a clear vision of the triumphant issue of all this havoc and horror,—home, country, a new fatherland in the world, "the last and the noblest of time," which should erect its power and renown not on the antique vulgarities of conquest and slaughter, but on the happiness of men,—on liberty, justice, opportunity, science, beauty, genius:

"A world is thy realm: for a world be thy laws,
Enlarged as thine empire, and just as thy cause."

Therefore, with this vision before him, the singer, alone on the armed hill-sides of the Hudson, there trying to find some lofty cheer for others, finds it likewise for himself:

"Thus, as down a lone valley, with cedars o'erspread,
From war's dread confusion I pensively strayed—
The gloom from the face of fair heav'n retired;
The winds ceased to murmur; the thunders expired;
Perfumes, as of Eden, flowed sweetly along,
And a voice, as of angels, enchantingly sung,—
'Columbia, Columbia, to glory arise,
The queen of the world, and the child of the skies.'"[1]

III.

For the detail of this man's life from the time that he left the army in 1778 until, in 1795, he attained to his true and sovereign place in the world—that of the presidency of Yale College—we need not here concern ourselves. Those were for him years of noble striving, in many capacities; and they prepared some portion of the public for that amazing

[1] "American Poems," etc., 62—64.

and almost incomparable development of his personal influence, which burst forth with the beginning of his presidency, and went on for the subsequent twenty-two years, gathering volume and force to the very end. Into this earlier period, however, fall three literary incidents which had at the time a large place in his thoughts, but which, in this retrospect, may be justly set forth in few words. These incidents were the successive publication of three carefully wrought and very ambitious compositions, in the three different forms of epic, satirical, and descriptive poetry.

The first was "The Conquest of Canaan," in eleven books of rhymed pentameter verse, finished in 1774, but on account of the Revolutionary War kept back from publication until 1785. The motto on the title-page, taken from Pope,—

"Fired, at first sight, with what the Muse imparts,
In fearless youth we tempt the height of arts";

is perhaps an intimation that the author was troubled by a momentary suspicion of the audaciousness of his poetic attempt, and is even

the proffer of an apology therefor in the improbable case of its failure. Self-distrust, however, was not a Timothean infirmity; and by the time our poet has travelled from his title-page to his dedication, and thence to the preface, he has resumed his native composure, and is able to speak quietly of "The Conquest of Canaan" as the first epic poem that had then appeared in America, and to adjust it to some sort of friendly familiarity with its true predecessors, the "Æneid" and the "Iliad." For example, refering in the preface to himself and his poem, he says: "It may be thought the result of inattention or ignorance, that he chose a subject in which his countrymen had no national interest. But he remarked that the Iliad and the Æneid were as agreeable to modern nations, as to the Greeks and Romans. . . . If he is not mistaken, the subject he has chosen possesses in a degree the same advantages."

Surely, "The Conquest of Canaan," with its eleven dreadful books of conventional rhymed pentameters,—all tending more or less to disarrange and confuse the familiar facts of Biblical history, as well as to dilute, to render

garrulous, and to cheapen, the noble reticence, the graphic simplicity, of the antique chronicle,—is such an epic as can be grappled with, in these degenerate days, by no man who is not himself as heroic as this verse assumes to be. In trying, therefore, to record here some equitable account of the poem, we may be permitted to turn away from the altered literary moods of our own age, and to offset the impatience and the repugnance which this epic is likely to beget within us, by the forbearing critical judgment pronounced upon it at the time of its first publication in England, by the most celebrated English poet then living. In 1788, an edition of "The Conquest of Canaan" appeared in London; and a copy of it having come into the hands of Cowper, received from him an attentive reading. "Poetry," says he, in his review of the American epic, "cannot be without fancy, and fancy can content herself with no materials as she finds them. The poet before us, availing himself of this privilege, has modelled the sacred narrative to his mind, and in such manner that he who would learn by what steps the Israelites became possessed of

the promised land, must still seek his information in the Bible. He fights all his battles under the walls of Ai, and opposes Jabin, King of Hazor, to Joshua, throughout the poem. The friendly disposition of the Gibeonites he ascribes, not to its true cause, the terror with which the miracles wrought in favor of Israel had inspired them, but to their previous conversion by Mina, a virgin of Edom, herself instructed in the camp of Israel. It is to be regretted, perhaps, that for the sake of simplifying his plan he has excluded from it the story of Rahab and the spies, and consequently of the fall of Jericho,—incidents which had great influence on all that followed, beautiful in themselves, and susceptible of much poetical embellishment.

"Such are some of the liberties which the author had taken with the story. A more sparing use of the 'potestes quidlibet audendi' might have been advisable on a scriptural subject. Readers, influenced by a due respect for scripture, do not well endure a violent disturbance of its order. In that case something more than criticism is offended. He makes, however, all

the atonement that can be expected from a poet: in his fictions he discovers much warmth of conception, and his numbers are very harmonious. His numbers, indeed, imitate pretty closely those of Pope, and therefore cannot fail to be musical; but he is chiefly to be commended for the animation with which he writes, and which rather increases as he proceeds, than suffers any abatement. His seventh book, in which he describes with great spirit the horrors of a battle fought by the light of a city in flames, affords one proof of it; and his tenth book, which is the last but one, another. Here an angel reveals to Joshua, in vision, the future destiny of his nation, and the poet takes his course through all the great events of prophecy, beginning with the settlement of the chosen race in Canaan, and closing with the consummation of all things. A strain of fine enthusiasm runs through the whole book; and we will venture to affirm, that no man who has a soul impressible by a bright display of the grandest subjects that revelation furnishes, will read it without emotion.

"The composition, however, is not without

a fault; and as we have candidly praised, we will censure with fidelity. By the motto which the author has chosen, we are led to suspect that he is young, and the chief blemish of his poem is one into which hardly anything but youth could have betrayed him. A little mature consideration would have taught him, that a subject nearly four thousand years old could not afford him a very fair opportunity for the celebration of his contemporaries. We found our attention to the wars of Joshua not pleasantly interrupted by a tribute of respect paid to the memory of a Mr. Wooster, slain on Ridgefield Hills in America; of a Mr. Warren, who fell in battle at Charlestown; and of a Mr. Mercer, who shared a similar fate at Princeton. He would plead, perhaps, his patriotism for his apology; but it is best to admit nothing that needs one." Cowper's neat discussion of the poem is then followed by a few verbal criticisms, in which the Englishman's knowledge of English seems not always to be superior to that of the American; whereupon he selects some passages from "The Conquest of Canaan," as illustrations of

its ordinary quality,—such as the "beautiful description of a malden going forth to meet her victorious lover on his return from battle," and the description of Night, which Cowper calls "highly poetical."[1]

IV.

In 1788, occurred the second of the three literary events alluded to above: the publication, without the author's name, of a satire in verse, entitled "The Triumph of Infidelity." In this work, Dwight enters upon a function in which as poet, teacher, preacher, prose-writer, or conversationist, he was ever afterward to be conspicuous, — that of defender of the Christian faith and even of Calvinistic orthodoxy, against all unfriendly comers, particularly those of the eighteenth century, whether French, English, Scotch, or American. From title-page to colophon, the intended method of the satire is irony,—a method calling, of course, for delicacy of movement, for arch and

[1] Cowper's review of "The Conquest of Canaan," first appeared in "The Analytical Review," and is reprinted in his "Works," Southey's ed., iv. 355-358.

mocking sprightliness, for grace and levity of stroke, and obviously beyond the quality of one who being, in the first place, always dead-in-earnest, emphatic, and even ponderous, and secondly quite guiltless of humor, was above all things an intellectual gladiator, and could hardly think of any other way of dealing with an antagonist than by the good old-fashioned one of felling him to the floor. Probably there can now be left for us on this planet few spectacles more provocative of the melancholy and pallid form of mirth, than that presented by these laborious efforts of the Reverend Doctor Timothy Dwight to be facetious at the expense of David Hume, or to slay the dreadful Monsieur de Voltaire in a duel of irony.

V.

In 1794, Dwight published a poem, mostly written seven years before that date,—his "Greenfield Hill,"[1]—that one of his larger poems which almost attained to popular favor, and fairly deserved to do so. The plan of this poem was evidently taken from that of Sir

[1] New York: 1794.

John Denham's "Cooper's Hill," even as Denham's poem followed the hint given by Ben Jonson in his "Penshurst," and in its turn gave the hint upon which Pope wrote his "Windsor Forest." After all, however, the plan demands no great effort of originality: it is the obvious one of founding a series of narrative and descriptive verses on such views of nature and of human nature as may be spread out before the eyes of a poet who takes his stand on some eminence, and looks off. In the present case, the eminence was furnished by the poet's own home at Greenfield. Standing upon that height, he looks abroad over an outspreading scene of great natural loveliness, and this gives to him "The Prospect," the first of the seven parts of which the poem is composed. After paying homage to the charm of natural scenery abounding there, he celebrates the social felicity to be seen all about him,—equality of condition, fairness, freedom, peace, universal thrift, manly dignity:

"How bless'd the sight of such a numerous train
In such small limits, tasting every good
Of competence, of independence, peace,

And liberty unmingled ; every house
On its own ground, and every happy swain
Beholding no superior but the laws,
And such as virtue, knowledge, useful life,
And zeal, exerted for the public good,
Have raised above the throng. For here, in truth,
Not in pretence, man is esteem'd as man.
Not here how rich, of what peculiar blood,
Or office high, but of what genuine worth,
What talents bright and useful, what good deeds,
What piety to God, what love to man,
The question is. To this an answer fair
The general heart secures. Full many a rich,
Vile knave, full many a blockhead, proud
Of ancient blood, these eyes have seen float down
Life's dirty kennel, trampled in the mud,
Stepp'd o'er unheeded, or push'd rudely on,
While Merit, rising from her humble skiff
To barks of nobler, and still nobler size,
Sail'd down the expanding stream, in triumph gay,
By every ship saluted."[1]

Thinking of all this social happiness abounding in his native land, and remembering, too, in those years that were even then ushering in the French Revolution, the awful contrast

[1] "Greenfield Hill," 12–13.

presented by the condition of the Old World, he counsels his fellow-countrymen to be self-centred and content :

" Ah then, thou favor'd land, thyself revere !
Look not to Europe for examples just
Of order, manners, customs, doctrines, laws,
Of happiness, or virtue. Cast around
The eye of searching reason, and declare
What Europe proffers, but a patchwork sway,
The garment Gothic, worn to fritter'd shreds,
. . . . .
Of silly pomp, and meanness train'd t' adore ;
Of wealth enormous, and enormous want,
Of lazy sinecures, and suffering toil.
. . . . .
See thick and fell her lowering gibbets stand.
. . . .
. . . See the world
All set to sale ; truth, friendship, public trust,
A nation's weal, religion, scripture, oaths,
Struck off by inch of candle. . . .
See war, from year to year, from age to age,
Unceasing, open on mankind the gates
Of devastation ; earth wet-deep with blood,
And pav'd with corpses ; cities whelm'd in flames,
And fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, and friends,
In millions hurried to the untimely tomb,

To gain a wigwam built on Nootka Sound,
Or Falkland's fruitful isles, or to secure
That rare soap-bubble, blown by children wise,
Floated in air, and ting'd with colors fine,
Pursu'd by thousands, and with rapture nam'd
National honor. . . . .
Say then, ah say, would'st thou for these exchange
Thy sacred institutions? thy mild laws?
Thy pure religion? morals uncorrupt?
Thy plain and honest manners,—order, peace,
And general weal?"[1]

This being the subject and manner of the first canto, each of the others has its own theme, relating to the past, present, or future, and suggested to the writer as he gazes off from his rural hill-top over forest, plain, or distant sea,—"The Flourishing Village," "The Burning of Fairfield," "The Destruction of the Pequods," "The Clergyman's Advice to the Villagers," "The Farmer's Advice to the Villagers," and "The Vision, or Prospect of the Future Happiness of America."

As a whole, it may be said of "Greenfield Hill" that the poem is even yet by no means impossible to read; and that there are in it

[1] "Greenfield Hill," 18–19.

occasional passages which may be recalled with pleasure, such as the description of the country pastor, in the first canto[1]; the picture of the village, in the fifth canto[2]; the invective against slavery, in the second[3]; the song of Death, in the third.[4] Undoubtedly the one fault of the poem at which every reader will most quickly take offence, is a fault of manner,—its imitativeness. Even when the poem does not descend quite to the depth of parody,[5] it does reproduce too closely, and too often, the very notes of Thomson, or Goldsmith, of Beattie, Edward Moore, or Gay; and for all this, the author's own apology[6] is rather an explanation than a defence.

VI.

Of Dwight's minor poems and fragments of poems, nearly all were written and published before his accession to the presidency of Yale College, such as "The Critics, A Fable,"[7] and

[1] Pp. 23–26. [2] P. 110. [3] P. 38. [4] Pp. 85–87.
[5] As in "The Flourishing Village."
"Fair Verna! loveliest village of the west," etc.
[6] Introduction, 8.
[7] "American Poems," 70–75.

the "Epistle to Colonel Humphreys,"[1] both in 1785; "The Trial of Faith,"[2] in 1786; "Address of the Genius of Columbia to the Members of the Continental Convention,"[3] in 1787; and "Message of Mordecai to Esther,"[4] being the conclusion of the second book of manuscript poem, in 1793.

Such is nearly the entire record of Timothy Dwight as a poet,—the chief omitted portion of the record being that which should celebrate his service as a writer of hymns,[5] and particu-

[1] "Works of David Humphreys," ed. 1790, 102–110; also, "American Poems," 75–84.

[2] "American Poems," 33–54.

[3] *Ibid.*, 55–62.

[4] *Ibid.*, 299–304.

[5] "The Psalms of David, Imitated in the language of the New Testament, and applied to the Christian Use and Worship, by I. Watts, D.D. A New Edition, in which the Psalms omitted by Dr. Watts are versified, local passages are altered, and a number of Psalms are versified anew, in proper Metres. By Timothy Dwight, D.D., President of Yale College. At the Request of the General Association of Connecticut. To the Psalms is added a Collection of Hymns. Hartford: Printed by Hudson and Goodwin, 1801." This well-packed title-page is the placid record of an ecclesiastical scandal and tragedy. In 1785, precisely the same revision of Dr. Watts's psalm-book had been made by Joel Barlow, under the sanction of the same high authority, and had been issued by the same publishing house. The book had given universal satisfaction, until poor Joel went over to France, and dabbled in the French Revolution, and fell, as was supposed, into all manner of French impiety and abomination. Of course, the saints of Connecticut could not be expected to enjoy any longer the psalms and hymns of the great sinner of Paris; and the task of President Dwight, as recorded on the above title-page, was really to demephitise and disinfect the book; it was to cast out of it all the writings of Joel, and to put into it, in their stead, as many as possible of the writings of Timothy.

larly of one hymn which has gone abroad over English Christendom,—

"I love thy kingdom, Lord."

Plainly enough, therefore, it is not by his poetry that we can account for the place which this man held in the homage of his contemporaries, or for the greatness and force of the stimulus which he gave to the intellectual life of his time. Moreover, when we look into his prose writings, we do not find ourselves much nearer to a solution of the problem. That solution is to be found, not in anything he wrote, but in everything he was,—in the man himself, in the amazing energy, variety, and charm of his personality. He was himself greater than anything he ever said or did; and for those who came near him, all that he did or said had an added import and fascination as proceeding

from one so overpoweringly competent and impressive.

Whatever gifts of intellect or of spirit he possessed, were housed in a bodily frame most imposing by its kingly largeness, graciousness, and majesty. One who knew him testifies that "on account of his noble person—the perfection of the visible man—he exercised a power in his day and generation somewhat beyond the natural scope of his mental endowments."[1] His eyes were black and piercing; his voice had extraordinary strength and richness, and a sympathetic quality whereby it entered "into the soul like the middle notes of an organ"[2]; and he moved and spoke like one who had come into the world in order to command it. Indeed, for all the ways by which men can be profoundly and honorably moved, he seems to have had an extraordinary equipment,—the highest social position, peculiar authority in his stations of pastor and college-president, immense contemporary renown as scholar, poet, prose-writer, thinker, and, finally, a faculty of

[1] S. G. Goodrich, "Reminiscences," etc., i., 353.
[2] *Ibid.*, 349.

oral speech, whether in public or private, which enthralled and drew after him all who heard.

So far as could be tested by his associates, his knowledge was nearly boundless, and was as wonderful with reference to small things as to great. "I think," said one of the ablest of his pupils, "I never knew the man who took so deep an interest in everything,—the best mode of cultivating a cabbage, as well as the phenomena of the heavens, or the employments of angels."[1] He was as pleased to talk with lowly people as with lofty ones,—his kitchen servant, the college janitor, blacksmiths, hostlers, boatmen, ploughmen: he drew from them what they best knew, and he well paid them in kind for what they gave. Experts and specialists were surprised by what he could tell them of their own crafts. One day, several workmen were sinking a well for him. It was their business, and not his; but when they encountered a certain difficulty which was too much for them, it seemed to be quite in the natural order of things, that he should instruct

[1] N. W. Taylor, in Sprague's "Annals," ii., 161.

them how to proceed. Once, on horseback, he saw men in the act of raising the frame of a house. His quick eye discovered a defect which had escaped the carpenters; and, calling out to them from the highroad, he "prevented a crash of the frame, which would probably have been fatal to the lives of several persons."[1] On one of his journeys, he arrived at a little village in New England, and was entertained there by a kinsman,—the principal people of the neighborhood, mostly farmers, being invited in to pass the evening with the great man, and to hear him talk, probably, as they supposed, on high themes of church, and state, and college, on literature, on philosophy. "I was disappointed," said one of the ladies afterward, "that he spent at least half the evening in talking to my husband and the other gentlemen about the cultivation of potatoes and the raising of sheep."[2] So, too, as a young man, when he went home after his father's death, and for a time carried on for his mother their two farms, the hired men in the field "used to

[1] Sprague, in Sparks's "American Biography," 2nd series, iv., 267.

[2] *Ibid.*, 268.

contest for the privilege of mowing next to Timothy—'that they might hear him talk.'"[1]

They who looked upon him from day to day thought him in no respect more extraordinary than in the power of his spirit to overstep and conquer his bodily limitations. During the last forty years of his life, he was seldom free from great anguish in the region of the head just back of the eyes, and was seldom able to employ his own eyesight for more than a quarter of an hour in any one day. In spite of this, he continued to be one of the men the best informed of his time, with respect to the doings of the world in letters, science, criticism, invention, industry, politics, war. Being unable, for the work of attention and memory, to trust to mechanical assistance, it happened in his case that every faculty which has to do with the seizing and holding of knowledge, grew to enormous strength. Whatsoever found admission to his mind, was straightway bestowed in its proper place, and there abode steadfast, being ever afterward at command. "His mind"—such is the testimony of two of his

[1] S. G. Goodrich, "Reminiscences," etc., i. 350, note.

sons—"resembled a well-arranged volume, in which every subject forms a separate section, and each view of that subject a separate page. He perfectly knew the order of the subjects; could turn to any page at will; and always found each impression as distinct and perfect as when first formed." So, during the most of his life, all his writing of whatever sort, in prose or verse, was done by the hand of another; and in this act of dictation, his utterance was so ready and so sure, that no amanuensis could ever keep pace with it, and no sentence thus produced was in need of amendment thereafter. While engaged in literary composition, he had no objection to the presence of company, and could "proceed with two trains of thought by the hour together, conversing with the company, and also dictating to the amanuensis." "Not only did the conversation of those around him not interrupt his course of thinking, but while waiting for his amanuensis to finish the sentence which he had last dictated, he would spend the interval in conversing with his family or his friends, without the least embarrassment, delay, or confusion of thought.

His mind took such firm hold of the subject which principally occupied it, that no ordinary force could separate it from its grasp. He was always conscious of the exact progress which he had made in every subject. When company, or any other occurrence, compelled him to break off suddenly, it would sometimes happen that he did not return to his employment until after the expiration of several days. On resuming his labors, all he required of his amanuensis was, to read the last word, or clause, that had been written; and he instantly would proceed to dictate as if no interruption had occurred. In several instances he was compelled to dictate a letter at the same time that he was dictating a sermon. In one, a pressing necessity obliged him to dictate three letters at the same time. He did so. Each amanuensis was fully occupied; and the letters needed no correction but pointing." "To conceive, to invent, to reason, was in such a sense instinctive, that neither employment appeared to fatigue or exhaust him. After severe and steady labor, his mind was as prepared for any species of exertion, as if it

had done nothing: for the activity and sprightliness of conversation, for the closer confinement of investigation, or for the excursive range of poetry."[1]

These extraordinary powers brought with them their own literary defect: nearly all his work has the fatal note of dictation. Everywhere what he seems to write is mere oratory; composition by the tongue, rather than the pen; the style of an eloquent declaimer with his audience in front of him; clever improvisation,—affluent, emphatic, sonorous, moving on and on in balanced members, accented by imposing gestures, stately, conventional, seldom mitigated by the modesty of an understatement, by forbearance in epithets, by lightness of touch, friendly ease, the charm of informality, the grace of a broken rhythm. Everywhere are the traces of his disastrous facility in the emission of sentences that could go into print without grammatical censure: most impressive, no doubt, as they rolled from his musical tongue, but, when lying cold and stark on the printed page, obviously marred by the

[1] "Memoir" in "Theology," etc., i., 43; 27; 43–44.

blemishes of nearly all extemporaneous and unchastised speech,—excess of assertion, monotony of form, redundance, and a notable aptitude for the commonplace whether in thought or phrase.

VII.

It will not be easy for us to get the true impression of this man, even in the work he did as an author, unless we see him actually engaged upon the great and manifold tasks at which he wrought, with a sort of Briarean versatility, during the culminating and most splendid period of his life. At the age of forty-three, he became president of Yale College. The institution had been in a deplorable state. Its true greatness begins with the day when he took command of it. With the joy of a strong man conscious that he had come to a task calling for all his powers, and worthy of them all, he gave himself, for the remainder of his life, and without reserve or stint, to the various and the enormous labors which it pleased him to regard as attaching to his office. The work of five different academic functions,—each

enough for the energies of a single ordinary man,—he seized and performed alone: the general superintendence of the college; the entire instruction of the senior class, mainly in logic, ethics, and metaphysics; the professorship of literature and oratory; the professorship of theology; finally, the college chaplaincy. His commanding position before the whole country and his great fame as an orator brought upon him, also, many demands for public service beyond the college walls. He was visited by most strangers passing through the place; his counsel was sought by young and old, by preachers, politicians, law-makers, magistrates; he became, as one of his pupils described him, "a Father to New England,—her moral legislator."[1] In the churches, his authority rose to such predominance that envious and ungodly persons were wont to avenge themselves by alluding to him as "Old Pope Dwight"; while children grew up in the faith that he was "second only to St. Paul."[2] So vast, indeed, and so benign was his general influence upon Ameri-

[1] "Memoir" in "Theology," etc., i., 52.
[2] S. G. Goodrich, "Reminiscences," etc., i., 348, 349.

can society, as an educator, preacher, publicist, a leader of men, a well-nigh resistless moral and intellectual chieftain, that one eminent judge who knew him, declared him to have been next to Washington as a national benefactor.'

VIII.

Of all the many forms of intellectual action into which his overflowing energies poured themselves, none so well fitted his talent as that wherein he stood and fought as a champion of the Christian religion, particularly against those assaults which were begotten in France in the eighteenth century, and which, in consequence of our close relations with France in the struggles of the American Revolution, had a prompt and a peculiarly favorable introduction into this country. For a time, the novelty, brilliance, and impetuosity of these assaults seemed to sweep all resistance before them, even in Puritan New England, and even in the strongholds of New England's piety and faith. Among cultivated

[1] Roger Minot Sherman, in Sprague's "Annals," ii., 165.

people everywhere, an impression had begun to obtain that Christianity could not confront this new criticism; that henceforth Christianity must be deemed a mere superstition—the pitiable cult of the ignorant; and that the perception of this was itself a badge of mental and even social superiority.

Such, especially, was the state of things at Yale College when, in 1795, Dwight entered upon its presidency. One of the earliest duties which met him there was that of presiding over the forensic discussions of the senior class. An amusing trait of the situation was that nearly all the members of that class had jocularly assumed the names of the leading infidels of the eighteenth century, being known to one another as Voltaire, Hume, Rousseau, Chubb, Collins, Tindal, Tom Paine, and so forth. It happened that, in submitting to their new president the topics which they desired to discuss before him, the first division of the class thought it a fine jest to offer him a certain question which they supposed he would instantly reject: "Are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments the word of God?" To

their astonishment, he accepted this question without the least demurral; and in arranging for its discussion, he requested all who chose to do so, to take the negative side, and to be entirely untrammelled in the production of their facts and arguments, only remembering that such a subject was to be handled without irreverence or flippancy. Nearly all the members of the division came forward as assailants of the Bible. Having listened attentively to all they had to say, the new president began very quietly to review the discussion. With the utmost kindness, but clearly and conclusively, he pointed out the inaccuracies and fallacies into which they had fallen, "and to their astonishment convinced them that their acquaintance with the subject was wholly superficial." Having thus cleared the field of supposed objections, he then advanced to a rapid presentation of the great positive proofs of the divine character of Christianity. Here his almost unrivalled gifts for dialectical statement were fully aroused; and as he went forward, step by step, in the development of the subject, his arguments seemed to fall upon his

hearers with an overwhelming and an ever-increasing force. Gradually every man in the room became convinced; and before the speaker had finished, his own deep emotion, expressing itself in looks, in gestures, and in the tones of a most thrilling and commanding eloquence, produced an effect upon those young men which no one could adequately describe. In their new president, at any rate, they saw a master whom they could admire and love; and with the swift and measureless generosity of youth, their hearts sprang to his side, giving him a fealty which never afterward failed him. Of course, the report of that great scene in his class-room sped fast through the college and through the town. Once for all, during his lifetime, that neighborhood was swept clear of the fashionable doctrine that the acceptance of Christianity was presumptive evidence either of a feeble brain, or of a cowardly heart.[1]

Moreover, the open and chivalrous stand which he thus took at the outset of his career as president, on behalf of ideas which were

[1] "Memoir" in "Theology," etc., i., 22–23; Sprague, in Sparks's "American Biography," 2nd series, iv., 316–318.

most dear to him, and in opposition to ideas which he thought to be full of falsehood and blight, was maintained by him to the very end. In academic instruction, in the college pulpit, in general society where his talk was nearly the most brilliant then to be heard, on public occasions to which he was often solicited outside the college grounds, he let slip no suitable opportunity for striking down what he deemed to be the false, and for building up what he deemed to be the true. For example, in 1797, in addressing the candiates for the baccalaureate, he gave two masterly discourses on "The Nature and Danger of Infidel Philosophy," which were soon afterward laid before the public in print.[1] Again, in 1801, in "A Discourse on Some Events of the Last Century,"[2] he reviewed, and arraigned with great force, the efforts which were made during that period, especially in Europe, to destroy the confidence of mankind in Christianity, these efforts being not "a candid and logical opposi-

[1] New Haven, 1798; republished in "Sermons," Edinburgh, 1828, i., 320-393.

[2] New Haven: 1801.

tion to Christianity, consisting of facts fairly stated and justly exhibited," but "an onset of passion, pride, and wit; a feint of conjectures and falsified facts; an incursion of sneers, and jests, gross banter, and delicate ridicule; a parade of hints and insinuations; a vigorous assault of fancy, passion, and appetite." "These," he adds, "were never the weapons of sober conviction; this was never the conduct of honest men."[1] Furthermore, on each Sunday morning during the academic year, he delivered in the chapel an elaborate sermon on some distinct doctrine of theology, natural or revealed, each sermon having its own place in a carefully wrought series which it required four years for him to deliver. Soon after his death, this vast collection of theological discourses was published, in five volumes, under the title of "Theology Explained and Defended."[2] Since that time, these discourses have been published again and again, in America and in England; in both countries, and for more than two generations, they have found multitudes

[1] "A Discourse," etc., 21.

[2] First ed. Middletown, Connecticut: 1818–1819.

of readers; they have been praised by Robert Hall[1] as among "the most important contributions which have been made to the science of theology in modern times"; and they undoubtedly form a more adequate embodiment than any other in our possession, of the mental resources, and particularly of the acumen and the argumentative eloquence, of their author.

In addition to such discourses, devoted to the exposition and defence of Christian theology, he produced, of course, a multitude of sermons of a more direct and practical kind, of which a selection, filling two volumes, was published in Edinburgh in 1828.[2] One of these sermons on "The Dignity and Excellency of the Gospel," had been read, while still in manuscript, by William Cowper, and had received the somewhat facile meed of that gentle poet's applause. "It pleased me," said he, "almost more than any that I have either seen or heard."[3] Two other sermons to be found in

[1] In conversation with William B. Sprague. Sparks's "American Biography"; 2nd series, iv., 358.

[2] "Sermons by Timothy Dwight, D.D., LL.D."

[3] Hayley, "Life and Letters of William Cowper," iii., 330; with which compare "Sermons," i., Preface, viii–ix.

this collection, the one entitled "Life—a Race," and the other, "The Harvest Past," may be profitably glanced at by any one desirous of inspecting the most brilliant and impressive examples left to us, of that species of pulpit eloquence for which President Dwight was in his life time so renowned. Eloquent, no doubt, many of these sermons are; yet in them all is nothing intellectually rare, or truly fine, no originality of insight, no deep or subtle suggestiveness, no gleam of spiritual genius, but ever and forever a masterful and exuberant array of the hard commonplaces of the sort of Calvinism that was then predominant in New England. Surely, it must have been some greatness in the preacher who once stood behind these sermons, which made them seem so great.

Perhaps nothing in all the multitude of his sermons is now so pleasant to read, because so simple and so genuine, as certain things he said, out of the fulness of personal knowledge and affection, concerning his contemporary and friend, George Washington. Thus, in giving an account of the mental traits of our supreme

American, Dwight says that he "was great, not by means of that brilliancy of mind, often appropriately termed genius, and usually coveted for ourselves and our children, and almost as usually attended with qualities which preclude wisdom, and depreciate or forbid worth; but by a constitutional character more happily formed. His mind was indeed inventive and full of resources; but its energy appears to have been originally directed to that which is practical and useful, and not to that which is shewy and specious. His judgment was clear and intuitive beyond that of most who have lived, and seemed instinctively to discern the proper answer to the celebrated Roman question,—'Cui bono erit?' . . . Although his early education was in a degree confined, his mind became possessed of extensive, various, and exact information. Perhaps there never was a mind on which theoretical speculations had less influence, and the decisions of common sense more."[1]

Where can one find a fairer statement of

[1] "A Discourse, delivered at New Haven, February 22 1800." New Haven: 1800. Pp. 23-24.

what constituted the military greatness of Washington, than in these compact sentences? —"As a warrior, his merit has, I believe, been fully and readily acknowledged; yet I have doubted whether it has always been justly estimated. His military greatness lay not principally in desperate sallies of courage, in the daring and brilliant exploits of a partisan. These would have ill suited his station, and most probably have ruined his cause and country. It consisted in the formation of extensive and masterly plans; effectual preparations; the cautious prevention of great evils, and the watchful seizure of every advantage; in combining heterogeneous materials into one military body, producing a system of military and political measures, concentering universal confidence, and diffusing an influence next to magical; in comprehending a great scheme of war, pursuing a regular system of acquiring strength for his country, and wearing out the strength of his enemies. To his conduct, both military and political, may, with exact propriety, be applied the observation which has been often made concerning his courage, that in the

most hazardous situations, no man ever saw his countenance change." [1]

When the orator comes to speak of the quality and largeness of the debt which the American people owe to Washington, his thought utters itself in an emotional passage, the evident sincerity of which lifts it quite above the level of a mere bravura of rhetoric: "The things which he has done are too great, too interesting, ever to be forgotten. Every object which we see, every employment in which we are engaged, every comfort which we enjoy, reminds us daily of his character. The general peace, liberty, religion, safety, and prosperity strongly impress, in every place, what he has done, suffered, and achieved. When a legislature assembles to enact laws, when courts meet to distribute justice, when congregations gather to worship God, they naturally, and almost necessarily, say,—'To Washington it is owing, under God, that we are here.' The farmer pursuing his plough in peace, the mechanic following the business of his shop in safety, ascribes the privilege to Washington. The

[1] "A Discourse," etc., 28.

house which, uninvaded, shelters us from the storm, the cheerful fireside surrounded by our little ones, the table spread in quiet with the bounties of Providence, the bed on which we repose in undisturbed security, utters, in silent but expressive language, the memory and the praise of Washington. Every ship bears the fruits of his labors on its wings, and exultingly spreads its streamers to his honor. The student meets him in the still and peaceful walk; the traveller sees him in all the prosperous and smiling scenes of his journey; and our whole country, in her thrift, order, safety, and morals, bears, inscribed in sunbeams, throughout her hills and her plains, the name and the glory of Washington."[1]

IX.

That book of Timothy Dwight's by which he is likely to be remembered the longest, his "Travels in New England and New York,"[2] is one which was begun by him probably with the least literary ambition, was certainly but an in-

[1] "A Discourse," etc., 29–30.

[2] First ed., 4 vols., New Haven: 1821–1822.

cidental product of his energies, and was not published at all until four years after his death. This huge work grew out of the fact that, during his first year in the presidency of Yale College, he formed the plan of indemnifying himself for the sedentary confinements of the term-time, by spending his vacations in a regular course of travelling, either in his gig or on horseback, through the Northern States, and that he persevered in this plan until near the close of his life, by which time he had made a series of journeys, with his own horse, long enough to have carried him two thirds of the distance round the globe. On his first journey, in the autumn of 1796, he jotted down in a note-book such bits of daily experience as seemed to him likely to be of interest to his family when he should return home. In the following year, this plan broadened out into that of a systematic journal, for the possible benefit of the whole family of man, and elastic enough to admit into itself everything, directly or indirectly suggested by his journeys, which could give instruction or diversion to any mind,—incidents of travel, natural scenery, statistics of

population and of social progress; talks by the way; local histories, legends, superstitions; sketches of towns, buildings, domestic life; notable persons; comments on the past, present, or future of our country, on forms of government, politics, religion, irreligion, climate, soil, trees, rocks, mountains, rivers, beasts, birds, storms, earthquakes, the public health, longevity, schools, colleges, ministers, lawyers, doctors, butchers, bakers, and candle-stick makers, together with race-problems, the aboriginal savages and their descendants, the inaccuracies and scurrilities of foreign travellers in America, international discourtesy, and so forth, and so forth.

Thus, under the frail disguise of a mere book of travels, the thing grew to be a vast literary miscellany; not a book, but a bibliotheca; in short, the private dumping ground of a philosopher, into which he could cast all the odds and ends of knowledge or opinion for which he happened to have no other convenient receptacle, and much of which might as well have occurred to him while sitting cross-legged by his own fireside, as while abroad on horseback.

Unluckily, in giving to us what he entitles his "Travels," he has not chosen to lay before us the original memoranda,—the rough jottings actually made by him from day to day, in taverns, under the shadow of a hill, by the road side, or in the friendly covert of a hay-stack. In their original form, doubtless, there would have been much gain for us, especially in the direction of reality, of off-hand friendliness, and simplicity. We should have been glad to see so august a being as President Dwight, for once, without his presidential robes on; nay, possibly, even in his shirt-sleeves; hungry, thirsty, hot, clamoring for his dinner, the sweat on his forehead, his trousers gray with dust or bespattered with mud, his slouch hat far gone in collapse, his rusty old saddle-bags lying on the floor by the side of his dirty boots. We should have been glad to find in his records of travel some occasional marks of human spontaneity, one symptom of haste, disappointment, vexation; here and there, possibly, a broken sentence, something unfinished, a crudity, an informality. Ah! not so, not so. Surely, President Dwight may not thus be seen of

mortal eyes. Therefore it is that every touch of realism, of homeliness, of familiarity,—if such there was in the original record,—is here obliterated; all things so natural as mere jottings are hammered out into formal and balanced sentences, are polished smooth and placed in line, in stately paragraphs, on dress parade, fit to go to court; while the memoranda meant for an itinerary are afterward, in cold blood, elaborated into the meaningless form of "Letters"—destitute of every sparkle of an epistolary quality—and addressed to a dummy called "an English Gentleman."

In spite, however, of such freezing officialism, such wearisome stiffness, it cannot be overlooked that some portions of the "Travels" are capable of giving entertainment. Everywhere, too, they are rich with the spoils of intellectual vigilance. Finally, as testimony touching the condition of the northern parts of the American Republic at about the beginning of the nineteenth century, they must grow in value as the generations pass.

X.

At no other period was his intellectual activity greater than during the last two years of his life. In 1815, he sent to the press, but without his own name, his "Remarks on the Review of Inchiquin's Letters, published in the Quarterly Review,"—a little book of outspoken and perfectly fruitless expostulation with the English journalists and other hack writers of that period, on account of their habitual dishonesty and incivility—their envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness,—in commenting on the people and affairs of this country. In February, 1816, in the midst of his abounding labors of every sort, and in the apparent freshness and fulness of all his powers, he was smitten with the torturing disease to which, after a struggle of eleven months, he slowly and heroically succumbed. Notwithstanding the anguish of that long combat with Death, and in addition to all his labors as president, professor, and preacher, he wrote a considerable volume of essays, chiefly on the Evidences of a Divine

Revelation[1]; he also finished the last half of a long poem on "A Contest between Genius and Common-Sense"; he likewise published in the "Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences" two papers in the domains respectively of philology and physics,—the one being entitled "Observations on Language," and the other, "On Light"; and having projected a periodical, to be christened "The Friend,"[2] to be published in half-sheet once a week, and to blend, somewhat after the manner of "The Spectator," literary criticism with discussions of individual and social duty, he wrote out several numbers, "for the purpose of satisfying himself, by the experiment, how many he could compose in a given space of time, without interfering with his other duties."[3] Besides all these writings, which with one exception still remain unpublished, this tireless giant is

[1] This manuscript is in the possession of Professor Egbert C. Smyth of Andover, to whose courtesy I am indebted for a careful description of its contents.

[2] In the selection of this title, the President of Yale did not illustrate his power of origination,—Coleridge's essays under the same title having first appeared in 1809.

[3] "Memoirs" in "Theology," i., 36.

said to have left in manuscript a large work on the life and writings of St. Paul.[1]

[1] Sprague, in Sparks's "American Biography," 2nd series, iv., 346. This statement I give on the testimony of a writer usually well-informed and accurate; but I suspect that the work thus mentioned is the same as that above described as being "chiefly on the Evidences of a Divine Revelation."

III.

THE LITERARY STRIVINGS OF MR. JOEL BARLOW.

III.

THE LITERARY STRIVINGS OF MR. JOEL BARLOW.

I—Barlow in New Haven in 1779—His letters to Noah Webster on the difficulties of a literary career in America—The need of bread a great inconvenience to a man of letters—David Humphreys intercedes for him with General Greene.

II—Becomes chaplain in the army—His experiences as depicted in his own letters—Witnesses the execution of Major André—Works on his poem, "The Vision of Columbus."

III—His earliest plan for this poem—Fails to get it published in 1782—His miscellaneous employments until 1787, in which year his "Vision of Columbus" is published—Its final revision and publication in 1807 as "The Columbiad."

IV—Outline of the poem.

V—The idea of "The Columbiad" both poetic and noble.—Barlow's mistake in abandoning the earlier and simpler form of it—Its faults—Its true character that of a huge philosophical and political essay in verse—Both in its merits and in its defects a fair expression of American national consciousness and character at that time.

VI—Minor writings—"The Conspiracy of Kings," 1792—Barlow is made a citizen of France by the National Convention—Candidate for the Convention from the Department

of Mont Blanc—At Chambery writes his one popular poem, "Hasty Pudding."

VII—Barlow's true literary work in prose, especially in history and argumentative discussion—By Jefferson's advice he plans a History of the American Revolution—His chief work as a prose writer—"Advice to the Privileged Orders"—"A Letter to the National Convention of France"—"A Letter to the People of Piedmont"—Later writings addressed to his own countrymen—His "Letter to Henry Gregoire" in disavowal of anti-Christian opinions or acts.

I.

DURING the earlier months of the year 1779, there was living at Yale College an alert young man, Joel Barlow by name, ostensibly devoting himself to graduate studies there, but really absorbed in the not incongruous employments of cultivating poetry, the affections of a certain young lady in the town, and his own fond hopes of a college-tutorship. In the July of the previous year he had taken at the college his first degree, and on that occasion had won for himself a quite exhilarating tea-pot reputation by a poem which, from the midst of all the clouds and clamors of that low-spirited war, celebrated "The Prospects of Peace." He was already in

his twenty-fifth year, his small patrimony spent, his eyes anxiously turned for some scholarlike employment which would permit him to take speedily unto himself the wife of his choice, and to set about the writing of a certain huge, patriotic, and philosophic poem with which his soul was even then uneasily swelling. So, on the 30th of January, of this year 1779, he poured out his heart by letter to his class-mate, Noah Webster, then plodding as a schoolmaster in a country-town in Connecticut:—"You and I are not the first in the world who have broken loose from college without friends and without fortune to push us into public notice. Let us show the world a few more examples of men standing upon their own merit and rising in spite of obstacles. . . . I am yet at a loss for an employment for life, and unhappy in this state of suspense. The American Republic is a fine theatre for the display of merit of every kind. If ever virtue is to be rewarded, it is in America. Literary accomplishments will not be so much noticed till sometime after the settlement of peace, and the people become more refined. More

blustering characters must bear sway at present, and the hardy veterans must retire from the field before the philosopher can retire to the closet. I don't feel as if ever I should enter upon either of the learned professions for a livelihood." [1]

As the months slipped away, his hope of the tutorship slipped away likewise; and to the brotherly heart of Noah Webster he once more spoke out his solicitude: "At present, I must own, my prospects are clouded. Mr. Perkins . . . advises me to go into business for a living, and make poetry only an amusement for leisure hours. . . . These leisure hours will never come to me, after I am buried in business for life." [2]

Then a whole year passed. The tutorship never came; but instead of it, there dawned

[1] "Life and Letters of Joel Barlow," by Charles Burr Todd, 18–19. My study of the published writings of Barlow was finished before the appearance of this capital book, in the preparation of which its author had the use of the great collection of Barlow papers made with so much perseverence by the late Lemuel G. Olmsted. The book has been of much use to me for personal items concerning Barlow, and especially for many passages from his private correspondence previously existing only in manuscript.

[2] "Life and Letters," etc., 20.

upon him the plan of finding a livelihood, together with some literary leisure, by going into the army as a chaplain. Of all this situation, a contemporary glimpse is given in a letter written to General Greene from New Haven, on the 10th of April, 1780, by Barlow's brother-poet, Captain David Humphreys: "There is a hopeful genius . . . in this town, who is so far gone in poetry, that there is no hope of reclaiming and making him attentive to anything else. To be more serious about the matter, the person intended is a young gentleman by the name of Barlow, who I could wish was introduced to your notice. He is certainly a very great genius, and has undertaken a work which, I am persuaded, will do honor to himself and his country—if he is enabled to prosecute it in the manner he has proposed. It is entitled the 'Vision of Columbus' and in the course of the poem will bring into view upon a large scale all the great events that have or will take place on the continent. From a sight of the first book, which he has nearly finished, I have conceived an exceeding high idea of the performance. But the difficulty is, it will

be a labor of three years at least; and his patrimony, which consisted in continental bills, is by no means sufficient to support him."[1]

II.

As a result of all these conferences over his affairs, it turned out that in the September following, with much reluctance and even with some desperation, he accepted a chaplaincy in the army,—not as having any sort of vocation to the sacred ministry, but only as having present need of bread, and the willingness to earn it, in this capacity of extemporized and amateur parson, by putting to pulpit uses his capacity to compose sonorous sentences and to declaim them. In a letter to his beloved, written on the 11th of September from the camp near Paramus in New Jersey, he sets forth, in entirely secular language, his earliest experience of the sacred office: "Did not arrive at camp till Saturday night. I lodged in a tent on a bed of bark that wet night. . . . Monday, the army marched . . . a few miles . . . .

[1] "Humphreys Family in America," 155–156.

On Thursday evening I began to open my mouth, which is none of the smallest and out of it there went a noise which the brigade received as the duty of my office. On Sunday . . . I gave them a preachment, and . . . was flattered afterward by some of the most sensible hearers with the great merit of the performance. I know you will ask me how I made out: I really did well, far beyond my expectations, and I find it all a joke, as much as Cassius did, to be in awe of such a thing as myself."[1]

Presently, compliments for his sermons were succeeded by other agreeable things,—marked civilities from great generals, the sight of imposing military pageants, even the place of honor at dinner with Washington himself,—all tending to convince our large-mouthed young evangelist, that his irruption into the sacred office, as amateur parson, was turning out no bad speculation after all. On the 23d of September, 1780, writing as usual to his beloved, he says: "This is Saturday afternoon. I have fixed my magazine for to-morrow, and

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 31–32.

my thoughts are at liberty to dwell upon their favorite object, the centre of all my happiness. We have to-day made a move back from Hackensack to an old encampment here near the river, where I have taken lodgings in an old Dutchman's bedroom. . . . The worst difficulty is, the Sabbath days come rather too thick."[1] As this comfortable young chaplain, snugly sitting there in the "old Dutchman's bedroom," scribbled away merrily to his sweetheart, little knew he of a great thing that had been happening but a few hours before, and not many miles off, just across the Hudson,—a deed of hell baffled, a deed of sorrow begun, through the arrest by three militiamen on the high-road near Tarrytown, of a handsome young gentleman, journeying southward on horseback, and found, after close investigation, to be carrying precious documents in his boots, —not the least precious document of them all being the man himself who wore the boots, to wit, Major John André, Adjutant-General of the British army. Even on the subsequent Monday morning, the news of Arnold's treachery

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 33–34.

and of André's arrest seems not to have reached Barlow's camp; for the careless strain of his love-letter still holds: "My dear, it is now Monday morning. I have left that blank in the line for Sunday, when I had no feelings worth communicating, except a few anxious thoughts about the preachment, which I made in a great Dutch barn. This is the third sermon I have given them, and I feel pretty well about it."[1]

The ink that formed those words could hardly have been dry on the paper, when Rumor, blowing furiously upon all her winds the names of Arnold and André, stormed into Barlow's quarters with her now prodigious babblement; and, just one week later, Barlow himself had something very unusual to write about. On the morning of that day, Monday, the 2d of October, riding a few miles northward to Tappan, he had seen a ghastly sight—a new-made gallows and the handsome young spy hanged thereon. Coming back to his quarters, he wrote to his confidante: "I have been since to attend the execution of Major André, Adju-

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 34.

tant-General of the British army, hanged as a spy. A politer gentleman, or a greater character of his age, is not alive. He was twenty-eight years old. He was dressed completely, and suffered with calmness and cheerfulness. With an appearance of philosophy and heroism, he observed that he was buoyed above the fear of death by the consciousness that every action of his life had been honorable, that in a few minutes he should be out of all pleasure or pain. Whether he has altered his mind, or whether he has any mind, is now best known to himself." [1]

After this rather pagan conclusion respecting poor André, thus ignobly impelled into that state wherein he was to ascertain what truth there might be in our dim earth-dream of a disembodied mind, the young chaplain reverts, by a natural and somewhat habitual transition, to the greater and more attractive subject of himself: "My situation in the army grows more and more agreeable. I am as hearty and as healthy as I can be in your absence. I gave them a preachment yesterday for the fourth

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 35.

time—a flaming political sermon, occasioned by the treachery of Arnold. I had a number of gentlemen from the other brigades, and I am told it did me great honor. . . . I had a billet last week from General Greene to dine with him." [1]

It is obvious that the temporarily Reverend Joel Barlow was now getting on in the world; and one observes without displeasure how, all along that period, his letters ripple with intimations of his own consciousness of the fact. Above all things, in the expected military inactivity of the approaching winter, he was glad to see his way to leisure for that huge patriotic and philosophic poem, which was struggling to break forth from within the brain of him, and which was to blazon in deathless verse the triumph of human freedom and of human nature then insupportably advancing toward its stately consummation in America. On the 18th of October, from Notaway, he writes: "My prospects for my poem are better now than ever. I shall have more leisure than I expected, and in winter shall have scarcely any interruption

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 35.

if I choose to pursue the plan. I intend to take winter quarters in the vicinity of camp, wherever it may be, and set Quamminy[1] to work like a sprite all winter. I will tell you more about it when I see you. Yesterday, the Reverend Mr. Claremont[2] had a billet from General Washington to dine. How do you think I felt when the greatest man on earth placed me at his right hand, with Lord Sterling at his left, at table? . . . Since the preaching of my sermon on the treason of Arnold and the glory of America, several gentlemen who did not hear it, and some who did, have been to read it. They talk of printing it. Colonel Humphreys has made me promise to loan him the plan and the first book of my poem to read at headquarters."[3]

III.

The poem, of which Barlow thus early in his life began to dream, and which proved to be, likewise, the one absorbing task and inspiration of nearly all his remaining years on earth, was

[1] A nickname for himself.
[2] Another of his jocose aliases.
[3] "Life and Letters," etc., 36–37.

originally named by him The "Vision of Columbus." It was to be "rather of the philosophic than epic kind." Moreover, it was "on the subject of America at large," and was "to exhibit the importance of this country in every point of view as the noblest and most elevated part of the earth, and reserved to be [the] last and greatest theatre for the improvement of mankind in every article in which they are capable of improvement."[1]

Whether this, our not over-bashful prophet Joel; whilom of Connecticut, hath truly within him, in any sufficient measure, the heaven-born vision and the strength for so mighty an argument of song, is doubtless a thing that may be very easily called into question. Meantime, no one can justly fail to note the sincerity of his early enthusiasm for a most noble idea, and the persistence of the same through all the toils, and distractions, and disenchantments of a busy and a conspicuous life. By the autumn of 1782, using sturdily whatsoever leisure he could pluck from his duties and diversions as military parson, he had got the poem so far advanced as to be

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 15.

able, after the manner of those days, to invite subscriptions for its immediate publication. Luckily, the public eagerness for the poem seems to have been expressed in a manner so temperate as to indicate to the author that any delay which he might choose to interpose in its publication, would probably be borne by mankind with becoming fortitude.

A delay of five years was, in fact, so interposed,—five years of extremely laborious and miscellaneous occupation on the part of Joel Barlow. He had been married in 1781; and having in 1783 established his home in Hartford, and having ceased to maintain any longer the tiresome farce of being a preacher, he went into the business of keeping a printing-office and of editing a weekly newspaper; he likewise undertook and performed the job of revising, for the Congregational churches of Connecticut, Watts's version of The Psalms, himself adding new metrical paraphrases of fourteen[1];

[1] In the Mass. Hist. Society's Library is a small volume, given by George Ticknor, and containing the contributions made by Barlow to the book of Psalms and Hymns of which he was editor. His translations of the Psalms are numbers 28, 43, 52, 53, 54, 59, 70, 79, 88, 113, 118, 137, 138, and 140. His hymns are as follows: numbers 63, 65, 66, 67, 68.

he also studied law, and was admitted to the bar; finally, according to his biographer, he "wrote a great deal of poetry, annuals, New Year's verses, bon mots, political squibs, and satires,"[1]—of the latter, the most notable being his contributions to "The Anarchiad."

Not until the spring of the year 1787, was he able to give to the public the great poem upon which he had been so long engaged, and even then in a form which he afterward characterized as a mere "sketch." In a small octavo volume, with a dedication to America's gracious ally, "His Most Christian Majesty, Louis the Sixteenth, King of France and Navarre," and with an appendix containing a list of nearly eight hundred subscribers in Europe and in America, "The Vision of Columbus," a philosophical poem in nine books and in nearly five thousand lines, made its entrance into the world, receiving, it is said, a not unfriendly reception in America, in England, and in France, and procuring for its author a leading position as an American man of letters.[2]

[1] Todd, in "Life and Letters" etc., 46.
[2] "Life and Letters," etc., 54.

Even then, however, the poem failed to relieve the author of his burden,—his still unspeakable conception of the magnificent part which America was then playing, and was destined to play, in the development of mankind throughout all the world, and throughout all time; and the subsequent twenty years of his life—years passed chiefly in France, and in no obscure relation to some of the great men and great events of that mighty time—were given by him consciously or unconsciously, to the reconstruction, recomposition, and enlargement of this poem. In 1807, having then returned to America, and being possessed of ample wealth as well as of a considerable name in the world, he issued the work, in its final form, under the title of "The Columbiad."

Probably no book, at once so ambitious in design, so imposing in bulk, and so superb in all the physical accessories of paper, type, illustration, and binding, had ever before proceeded from an American press. It contains twelve full-paged steel engravings, from designs painted expressly for the book by Fulton and Smirke. In place of the original dedication to

King Louis the Sixteenth, whom the author in the meantime had indirectly helped to dethrone and to decapitate, the work is inscribed to the American inventor of steam navigation. Then follows a preface in explanation of the poetic form, as well as of the poetic and the moral objects, of the work. This, again, is followed by an elaborate introduction, rehearsing in clear and stately prose the leading facts in the career of Columbus, after which the impetuous reader is no longer withheld from access to "The Columbiad" itself.

IV.

The poem opens with a night-scene in Valladolid,—the palace of King Ferdinand dimly discovered through "the drizzly fogs," and beneath one of its towers a dungeon, in which Columbus, old, sick, ruined, disheartened, lies in chains. Here, starting feverishly from a troubled sleep, the hapless old man moans to his dungeon walls the story of his life,—a life of vast, high-hearted endeavor and of world-enriching achievement, all basely rewarded by

poverty, imprisonment, pain, and shame. At the end of his sorrowful monologue,

> "A thundering sound
> Roll'd thro' the shuddering walls and shook the ground;
> O'er all the dungeon, where black arches bend,
> The roofs unfold, and streams of light descend;
> The growing splendor fills the astonish'd room,
> And gales ethereal breathe a glad perfume.
> Robed in the radiance, moved a form serene,
> Of human structure, but of heavenly mien;
> Near to the prisoner's couch he takes his stand,
> And waves, in sign of peace, his holy hand.
> Tall rose his stature; youth's endearing grace
> Adorn'd his limbs and brighten'd in his face;
> Loose o'er his locks the star of evening hung,
> And sounds melodious moved his cheerful tongue." [1]

This resplendent and gracious visitor, who enters the dungeon in the midst of such supernatural demonstrations, is of the ancient race of Titans, Hesper by name, the brother of Atlas, himself the guardian genius of the western regions of the earth, and especially of those enormous twin-continents to which Columbus had at last opened the way. To Columbus, in

[1] Book i., 127–140.

this his uttermost misery, has Hesper come with a message and a mission of comfort; he assures the broken-hearted old man that, although he is thus ignobly treated by an age in which the rewards of life are dealt out by "blinded faction," an age in which the millions are "awed into slaves," while

> —"blood-stained steps lead upward to a throne,"

yet the future has in store for him a boundless recompense, and of this he promises to give him an immediate vision. At the word of Hesper,

> —"Columbus raised his head;
> His chains dropt off; the cave, the castle fled";

while together they walked forth from the prison. Steep before them stretched "a heaven-illumined road" leading up a mountain, of a height so enormous that it could overlook all the earth, even its summit being fragrant with the breath of flowers. This is the mount from which, for his consolation, the vision of distant lands, and of distant ages, and of peoples and civilizations unborn, is to

be enrolled before the eyes of the weary and dying old man:

"Led by the Power, the hero gain'd the height;
New strength and brilliance flush'd his mortal sight;
When calm before them flow'd the western main,
Far stretch'd, immense, a sky-encircled plain.
No sail, no isle, no cloud invests the bound,
Nor billowy surge disturbs the vast profound;
Till, deep in distant heavens, the sun's blue ray
Topt unknown cliffs and call'd them up to day;
Slow glimmering into sight wide regions drew,
And rose and brighten'd on the expanding view;
Fair sweep the waves, the lessening ocean smiles,
In misty radiance loom a thousand isles;
Near and more near the long drawn coasts arise,
Bays stretch their arms and mountains lift the skies;
The lakes, high mounded, point the streams their way,
Slopes, ridges, plains their spreading skirts display,
The vales branch forth, high walk approaching groves,
And all the majesty of nature moves."[1]

From this miraculous altitude, therefore, and by the aid of this miraculous conductor, does Columbus now look abroad over all that portion

[1] Book i., 197–214.

of the world which "his daring sail descried," his eyes being suddenly clothed, for that stupendous undertaking, with the gift of piercing alike into distance and into futurity; and what he thus sees, as regards nature and man and man's doing, is then reported, with eager and unflagging energy, and likewise in the conventional rhymed pentameters of eighteenth century English verse, through the generous profusion of these ten books. Over all that new-found hemisphere, do the anointed eyes of Columbus travel, on their swift and heart-thrilling quest, from land to land, from age to age, taking inventory of what those far-off realms contain: the lavish amplitude on which all things there are builded,—mountains, rivers, cataracts, forests, plains; the beauty and the benignity and the costliness which dwell there in earth and sky and sea; and the myriad tokens that there indeed were felt the last culminating, and most bountiful, and most tender, touches of the divine workmanship in the act of creation:

"For here great nature, with a bolder hand,
Roll'd the broad stream, and heaved the lifted land;

And here, from finish'd earth, triumphant trod
The last ascending steps of her creating God."[1]

After this colossal topographical survey of the hemisphere he had discovered, Columbus is enabled by the same resplendent and all-competent cicerone to look forth on the various tribes and nations that dwell there, to learn the story of their origin, and to inspect the cities which they had founded,—especially lingering over the romantic and pathetic history of Peru. From the past, Hesper now turns to the future, giving to Columbus, in the first place, a vision of the maleficent, dire catastrophe brought upon Peru in consequence of its invasion and conquest by his own successors; whereat recoiling in grief from so dreadful a result of the great deed of his life, he begs to be permitted to see no more. To assuage this burst of grief, Hesper then causes all Europe to be displayed before the eyes of Columbus, exhibiting to him the manifold and magnificent effects which mankind was to experience from the discovery of America,—commerce quickened, letters revived, religion reformed, government ameliorated, and finally the enormous exodus of the western nations from Europe to America begun, particularly the establishment of England's colonies in the northern continent. Thenceforward, through several books of the poem, the vision is confined to that continent, and to the unfolding of its colonial experience; the sharp and fatal antithesis there developed between the colonies of England and those of France; the outbreak of war between them; Braddock's last battle, and the apparition of Washington on that field of slaughter; the actions of Abercrombie, of Amherst, of Wolfe; finally, peace. Now, the English colonies, freed from the appalling danger which had so long menaced them from their French rivals, seem about to enter on their golden age, when lo, dark clouds gather over the eastern seas, and roll westward, and bury the continent in their black folds. Upon sight of this dismal eclipse, Hesper explains to Columbus its meaning. "Here," he tells him, "march the troublous years," during which the colonies, in order to save themselves from "lawless rule,"

[1] Book i., 357-360.

are forced to repudiate their allegiance to England, and to assert an untrammelled national life. Then, as Columbus continues to gaze into the darkness, the central cloud bursts and moves away, giving to him a sudden view of the continental congress in full session in the "throng'd city" of Penn, of the several free-minded and indomitable communities which its members represent, and of "their endeavors to arrest the violence of England." As these endeavors prove futile, "the demon War" is seen "stalking over the ocean," leading against America the English forces:

"Slow, dark, portentous, as the meteors sweep,
And curtain black the illimitable deep,
High stalks, from surge to surge, a demon Form,
That howls thro' heaven and breathes a billowing storm.
His head is hung with clouds; his giant hand
Flings a blue flame far flickering to the land;
His blood-stain'd limbs drip carnage as he strides,
And taint with gory glume the staggering tides;
Like two red suns his quivering eyeballs glare,
His mouth disgorges all the stores of war,
Pikes, muskets, mortars, guns, and globes of fire,
And lighted bombs that fusing trails expire.
Perch'd on his helmet, two twin sisters rode,

The favorite offspring of the murderous god,—
Famine and Pestilence; . . .
Then earth convulsive groan'd, high shriek'd the air,
And hell in gratulation call'd him War.
Behind the fiend, swift hovering for the coast,
Hangs o'er the wave Britannia's sail-wing'd host;
They crowd the main, they spread their sheets abroad,
From the wide Lawrence to the Georgian flood,
Point their black batteries to the peopled shore,
And spouting flames commence the hideous roar."[1]

As Columbus and his conductor continue to gaze upon this far-off scene of havoc, of gigantic destruction, of portentous cruelty, they witness what proves to be a prophetic rehearsal of all the great events of the American Revolutionary War,—the conflagration of towns along the coast from Falmouth to Norfolk; the Battle of Bunker Hill; the arrival of Washington to take command of the American forces before Boston; the death of Montgomery under the walls of Quebec; the loss of New York; Washington's retreat across the Delaware; his brilliant and victorious

[1] Book v., 471–498.

exploit in return; the cruelties inflicted on American prisoners by the British in their prison ships; Burgoyne's invasion, defeat, surrender; the interposition of France, and the renewal of the struggle under her assistance; finally, the investiture of Yorktown, and the surrender of Lord Cornwallis and his army. At the end of all this military tumult, blending "the groans of death and battle's bray," "the drum's rude clang, the war wolf's hideous howl,"—the description of which fills three books,—the author, as a matter of course, addresses a hymn to Peace, proclaiming his own delight in the privilege, at last, of celebrating her victories.

But not at once is the poet permitted to yield his verse to the service of merely joyous and unimperilled peace; and addressing in his own person his fellow-countrymen as they emerge from the Revolutionary War, he says:

"Think not, my friends, the patriot's task is done,
Or Freedom safe, because the battle 's won." [1]

Peace, he tells them, hath her responsibilities and her dangers, no less than her delights; and

[1] Book viii., 79–80.

the treasure of civic freedom which they have now gained through so much suffering, they may lose again through too much confidence and through too little care. He solemnly summons them to the exercise of the highest virtues of men and of patriots; and he implores them above all things to enquire whether they, Americans, the loud-voiced champions before all the world, of the principle of freedom for man, are not themselves, even then, guilty of a most atrocious and a most damning violation of that vaunted principle. At this reference to the ineffable crime then perpetrated by Americans upon Africans, there follows a passage of genuine poetic sublimity: it is the tremendous expostulation of Atlas, the guardian-genius of Africa, addressed to Hesper, the guardian-genius of America:

"Hark! a dread voice, with heaven-astounding strain,
Swells like a thousand thunders o'er the main.

. . . . . .

———'t is Atlas, throned sublime,
Great brother guardian of old Afric's clime;
High o'er his coast he rears his frowning form,

O'erlooks and calms his sky-borne fields of storm,
Flings off the clouds that round his shoulders hung,
And breaks from clogs of ice his trembling tongue;
While far thro' space with rage and grief he glares,
Heaves his hoar head and shakes the heaven he bears:
—'Son of my sire! Oh latest brightest birth
That sprang from his fair spouse, prolific Earth!
Great Hesper, say what sordid ceaseless hate
Impels thee thus to mar my elder state.
Our sire assign'd thee thy more glorious reign,
Secured and bounded by our laboring main,—
That main (tho' still my birthright name it bear)
Thy sails o'ershadow, thy brave children share.
I grant it thus; while air surrounds the ball,
Let breezes blow, let oceans roll for all.
But thy proud sons, a strange ungenerous race,
Enslave my tribes, and each fair world disgrace,
Provoke wide vengeance in their lawless land,
The bolt ill placed in thy forbearing hand.'"

As he continues to describe and to denounce the insolence and the inhumanity of the vast institutional crime perpetrated, age after age, upon the people of Africa by America's "strange ungenerous race," the angry Titan waxes every moment angrier and still more angry, under the effects of his own eloquence;

and his ever-accumulating wrath explodes in a series of grim, huge taunts—such, indeed, as any right-minded Titan would very naturally give way to—over the contrast then to be seen, between the lofty political pretensions of the American patriots, and that most foul performance of theirs in actual life:

"Enslave my tribes! then boast their cantons free,
Preach faith and justice, bend the sainted knee,
Invite all men their liberty to share?
. . . . . .
Enslave my tribes! what half mankind imban,
Then read, expound, enforce the rights of man?
Prove plain and clear how nature's hand of old
Cast all men equal in her human mould?
. . . . . .
Write, speak, avenge, for ancient sufferings feel,
Impale each tyrant on their pens of steel,
Declare how freemen can a world create,
And slaves and masters ruin every state?
Enslave my tribes! and think with dumb disdain,
To 'scape this arm and prove my vengeance vain?
But look! methinks beneath my foot I ken
A few chain'd things that seem no longer men,—
Thy sons, perchance, whom Barbary's coast can tell
The sweets of that loved scourge they wield so well."

[1] Book viii., 214–240.

The hint, lurking in those four lines, of some bitter retaliation in kind to be inflicted by Africa upon America, leads up to a vivid prophecy of the sufferings of American captives at the hands of the Barbary pirates. If, however, this retaliation be not sufficient, it shall prove, continues the Titan, but the beginning of a penal vengeance that will certainly be subject to no imputation of incompleteness:

"Nor shall these pangs atone the nation's crime;
Far heavier vengeance in the march of time,
Attends them still, if still they dare debase
And hold enthrall'd the millions of my race,—
A vengeance that shall shake the world's deep frame,
That heaven abhors, and hell might shrink to name."[1]

The threat of final and all-sufficing vengeance, which the guardian genius of Africa then hurls across the ocean at his offending brother, the guardian genius of America, has indeed a very impressive energy and sublimity. Deep down "in earth's mid caves," where the very bases of the Alps and of the Andes meet together, and

[1] Book viii., 261–266.

"lock their granite feet," are already "cauldron'd floods of fire,"—which fire, says Atlas:

"Waits but the fissure that my wave shall find,
To force the foldings of the rocky rind,
Crash your curst continent, and wheel on high
The vast avulsion vaulting thro' the sky,
Fling far the bursting fragments, scattering wide
Rocks, mountains, nations o'er the burning tide."

So complete shall be this avenging cataclysm, that the whole continental barrier hitherto interposed between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, shall be devoured, and nothing be left visible save

"Two oceans dasht in one—that climbs and roars,
And seeks in vain the exterminated shores."

Nothing shall be left visible, indeed, of all that proud, crime-enacting continent, except a single, solitary crag jutting out above the desolate fury of the waters:

"A dim lone island in the watery waste
Mourns all his minor mountains wreck'd and hurl'd,
Stands the sad relic of a ruin'd world,
Attests the wrath our Mother kept in store,
And rues her judgments on the race she bore."

And in this void and desolation, henceforth, no living thing shall stir, save only that imperial Eagle which the people thus annihilated had once dared to claim as their own:

"His own bald Eagle skims alone the sky,
Darts from all points of heaven her searching eye,
Kens thro' the gloom her ancient rock of rest,
And finds her cavern'd crag, her solitary nest."[1]

At the conclusion of this prodigious protest against the crime of American slavery,—a protest, the conception of which is in a very high degree majestic and poetic,—the author speaks once more in his real character; and with a noble intensity of passion, he implores his fellow-countrymen, themselves just emerging in triumph from a war for freedom, not to deny to others that freedom which they had so well won for themselves:—

"Fathers and friends, I know the boding fears
Of angry genii and of rending spheres
Assail not souls like yours, whom Science bright
Thro' shadowy nature leads with surer light;
For whom she strips the heavens of love and hate,
Strikes from Jove's hand the brandisht bolt of fate,

[1] Book viii., 271–304.

Gives each effect its own indubious cause,
Divides her moral from her physic laws,
Shows where the virtues find their nurturing food,
And men their motives to be just and good.
You scorn the Titan's threat; nor shall I strain
The powers of pathos in a task so vain
As Afric's wrongs to sing; for what avails
To harp for you these known familiar tales?
To tongue mute misery, and re-rack the soul
With crimes oft copied from that bloody scroll
Where Slavery pens her woes?—tho' 't is but there
We learn the weight that moral pain can bear.
The tale might startle still the accustomed ear.

. . . . . .

Melt every heart, and thro' the nation gain
Full many a voice to break the barbarous chain."[1]

But not alone to the compassion of his brethren will he appeal, but rather and especially to their self-respect, and to their homage for that ancient and unpitying law whereunder he who takes freedom from another, takes it likewise from himself:

"Tyrants are never free; and, small and great,
All masters must be tyrants soon or late;
So nature works; and oft the lordling knave
Turns out at once a tyrant and a slave.

. . . . . .

Ah! would you not be slaves, with lords and kings,

[1] Book viii., 309–330.

Then be not masters,—there the danger springs.
The whole crude system that torments the earth,
Of rank, privation, privilege of birth,
False honor, fraud, corruption, civil jars,
The rage of conquest and the curse of wars,
Pandora's total shower, all ills combined
That erst o'erwhelm'd and still distress mankind,
Box'd up secure in your deliberate hand,
Wait your bequest, to fix or fly this land.
Equality of Right is nature's plan;
And following nature is the march of man."[1]

Rallying from this strong and not inharmonious digression, the poem once more resumes its natural course, and flows on and on to its many-membered close, through two more books,—during which our most affable, erudite, and philosophical Titan reveals to Columbus the gradual advancement of mankind in all the great elements and attributes of civilization; likewise explains to him nature's law of progress, "from the birth of the universe to the present state of the earth and its inhabitants"; and after much more instructive discourse on politics, philosophy, history, chemistry, physics, constitutional law, and mechanical inventions,

[1] Book viii., 335–364.

not altogether omitting the Hanseatic league, Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Herschel, Descartes, Bacon, the magnetic needle, and the printing-press, he exhibits to him with a limning of quite undisturbed optimism, the complete success of the federal system in America, the extension of that system over all the earth, and at last, in one august dissolving view, the millenium of cosmopolitan statesmanship through "a general congress of all nations, assembled to establish the political harmony of mankind."[1]

V.

However great may be the faults to be found with the execution of this poem, it is hardly possible to deny that its idea, at any rate, is both poetic and noble; it is to connect, in a work of high imaginative literature, all that is beneficent and soul-stirring in the aggregate contribution made by America to the general stock of the world's welfare, with all that is heroic and pathetic in the career of him, the undismayed idealist, the saint, the admiral of

[1] Book x., Argument.

boundless faith and sorrow, who made America known to the rest of the world.

Barlow's earlier and less ambitious project for his poem, as seen in his draft written in 1779, was the wiser one: "The poem will be rather of the philosophic than epic kind."[1] Even eight years afterward, at the time of its first publication, he still saw that, as the stupendous consequences of the discovery of America could be represented to Columbus only in vision,[2] so such representation would be likely to produce, not a real story, but merely a succession of scenes painted on the air, too impalpable and flitting, as well as too disconnected, for the purposes of an epic. No title for the poem, therefore, could have been better than its first title, "The Vision of Columbus"; because, being perfectly accurate, it was also quite unpretentious, and involved no hazards by a challenge which might result in discomfiture and derision. Unfortunately, in his final reconstruction of the poem, this sane thought seems to have yielded to the cravings

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 15.

[2] "The Vision of Columbus," Introd., 20, fifth ed. London: 1794.

of an inordinate literary ambition; and by the new title which he gave to his work, and by its new prelude, and by its new supernatural machinery of river gods and other clumsy and incongruous imitations of Homer and Virgil, he claimed for his poem the awful honors of an epic, and thereby invoked upon it literary comparisons and critical tests which it could not endure. Nay, it may perhaps be said, that the very pomp and opulence of typographical côstume which attended its re-entrance into the world, its grandiose and too prosperous equipment, even its physical magnitude—its arrogant and preposterous bigness, as a mere book,—all had the effect of averting sympathy and of inviting scorn, as though it were an attempt by mere bulk and bravado and good clothes to overawe the sentinels who guard the approaches to Parnassus.

Better would it have been, both for the poem and for the poet, if, in his later revision of the work, he had attempted no change in its essential character. A philosophical poem exhibiting, under the device of a vision seen by the discoverer of America, the vast and benign

function assigned to the New World in the development of mankind, might have deserved and received in our literature the homage at least of serious consideration. Of course, never upon any plan could the poem have taken rank as a work of genius, or have escaped the penalties of the author's great literary defects. Under any character, it would have had no tender or delicate qualities, no lightness of touch, no flashes of beauty, not a ripple of humor, no quiet and dainty charm; a surfeit, rather, of vehemence and proclamation,—sonorous, metallic, rhetorical; forced description, manufactured sentiment, sublimity generated of pasteboard and starch; an ever-rolling tattoo of declamation, invective, eulogy; big, gaudy flowers of poetry which are also flowers of wax. Moreover, not even genius could have saved this poem from the literary disaster involved in its adoption of that conventional poetic diction and of that worn-out metrical form from which, after a whole century of favor, English literature was just then turning away in a recoil of weariness and disgust.

And yet, with all his limitations as a poet,

the author of "The Columbiad" is entitled to the praise due to a sturdy and effective ethical teacher in verse. In didactic expression, the poem is often epigrammatic, trenchant, and strong; nay, in strenuous moral exposition and enforcement, it is at times even noble and impressive. Everywhere is the author faithful to the great object of his poem, namely, "to inculcate the love of rational liberty, and to discountenance the deleterious passion for violence and war; to show that on the basis of the republican principle all good morals, as well as good government and hopes of permanent peace, must be founded; and to convince the student in political science that the theoretical question of the future advancement of human society . . . is held in dispute and still unsettled only because we have had too little experience of organized liberty in the government of nations, to have well considered its effects."[1] Everywhere in the poem one finds an invincible hope for human liberty, for the victories of reason, for the ultimate conquest of moral evil in the world. It represents, too,

[1] "The Columbiad," Preface, x.

the manifold intellectual aspirations of the time in which he lived, its scientific progress, its mechanical ingenuity and daring, its wish to reject all degrading forms of faith, the unquenchable confidence of human nature in the final and happy solution of all those problems that then pained the earth with their unutterable menace. Finally, there breathes through the poem the most genuine love of country. In the eyes of this writer America is, by favor of Heaven, the superior land of all the earth. His love for America is something more than a clannish instinct, something better than the mere greed of provincialism; and this huge political and philosophical essay in verse, the writing of which formed the one real business of Barlow's life, may be accepted by us, whether we are proud of the fact or not, as an involuntary expression, for that period, of the American national consciousness and even of the American national character itself, as sincere, and as unflinching as were, in their different ways, the renowned state-paper of Jefferson, the constitution of 1789, and Washington's farewell address.

VI.

Respecting the minor writings of Joel Barlow, we may note, in passing, two products of his callow academic muse: "An Elegy on the late Honorable Titus Hosmer, Esquire," in 1780[1]; and "A Poem" spoken at the Public Commencement at Yale College, in 1781.[2] Eleven years after the latter date, when he had acquired something like reputation by his "Vision of Columbus," and something like notoriety by his active political radicalism in England and in France, he published a poetical diatribe entitled "The Conspiracy of Kings."[3] The poem is of the kind called satire; attempts to catch the tone of Juvenal; aims to be very exasperating, even appalling; somehow succeeds in being only abusive; emits mere howls of metrical vituperation against those unhappy gentlemen—

> "for blood and plunder famed,
> Sultans, or Kings, or Czars, or Emp'rors named,"

[1] "American Poems," 108–117.

[2] *Ibid.*, 94–107.

[3] "The Columbian Muse," 1–10, where it is printed without the "Preface" and "Note on Mr. Burke," both of which are given in "The Political Writings of Joel Barlow," 237–258.

and especially against their triumphant literary champion, Edmund Burke.

Late in the year 1792, Barlow, who had been made by the National Convention a citizen of France—an honor then bestowed on no other American except Washington and Hamilton—went by invitation into Savoy, in the hope of being returned for the new Department of Mont Blanc as one of its deputies in the National Convention. At Chambery he remained several weeks, captivated by its scenery, finding great refreshment in the simple life of its people, and every day, amid its green mountain slopes and its pretty farm-houses, reminded of his own early life among the hills of western Connecticut. Writing to his wife, he said: "With you and a little farm among these romantic mountains and valleys, I could be happy, content; I would care no more for the pleasures of the plain. But America—the word is sweetness to my soul; it awakens all the tenderness of my nature."[1] In this mood of patriotic reminiscence and of longing for home, it happened

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 99.

to him, one evening, as he sat down to supper "under the smoky rafters of a Savoyard inn," to find steaming hot upon the table the favorite dish of his own New England—"Hasty-Pudding,"—a dish for which he had many a time enquired in vain in London and Paris. The exile's heart was touched; and with genuine enthusiasm, and in lucky disregard of his usual poetic stilts, he then produced the one really popular poem he ever wrote,—the famous mock pastoral which bears the name of the dish that had so inspired him, and which in its opening lines preserves a glimpse of the romantic Italian scene wherein it was written, even as it is pervaded throughout by the homely tones and tints of domestic life in colonial New England:

"Ye Alps audacious, through the heavens that rise,
To cramp the day and hide me from the skies;
Ye Gallic flags that, o'er their heights unfurled,
Bear death to kings and freedom to the world,
I sing not you. A softer theme I choose,
A virgin theme, unconscious of the Muse,
But fruitful, rich, well suited to inspire
The purest frenzy of poetic fire.

. . . . . .

Dear Hasty-Pudding, what unpromised joy

Expands my heart to meet thee in Savoy !
Doomed o'er the world through devious paths to
roam,
Each clime my country, and each house my home,
My soul is soothed, my cares have found an end,
I greet my long-lost, unforgotten friend.

For thee through Paris, that corrupted town,
How long in vain I wandered up and down,
Where shameless Bacchus, with his drenching
hoard
Cold from his cave, usurps the morning board.
London is lost in smoke, and steeped in tea ;
No Yankee there can lisp the name of thee.
The uncouth word, a libel on the town,
Would call a proclamation from the Crown.

. . . . . .

But here, though distant from our native shore,
With mutual glee we meet and laugh once more.
The same ! I know thee by that yellow face,
That strong complexion of true Indian race,
Which time can never change, nor soil impair,
Nor Alpine snows, nor Turkey's morbid air ;

. . . . . .

My song, resounding in its grateful glee,
No merit claims,—I praise myself in thee.
My father loved thee through his length of days !
For thee his fields were shaded o'er with maize ;
From thee what health, what vigor he possessed,
Ten sturdy freemen from his loins attest.
Thy constellation ruled my natal morn,

And all my bones were made of Indian corn.
Delicious grain ! whatever from it take,
To roast or boil, to smother or to bake,
In every dish 't is welcome still to me,
But most, my Hasty-Pudding ! most in thee." [1]

VII.

The field of literature in which Barlow seems to have been capable of real mastership was that of prose,—particularly in the forms of history and argumentative discussion ; and his laborious and life-long devotion to poetry merely illustrates a tendency occasionally to be seen in the history of men of letters—the tendency to mistake the whispers of ambition for the invitations of genius. Certainly Barlow was a robust, sagacious, and very able man ; he had wide and enlightened sympathies, an extraordinary capacity for practical affairs either in finance, politics, or diplomacy, and a many-sidedness of intellectual activity and accomplishment which might, perhaps, justify

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 99-108, where the poem is given entire. A better copy, as having the "Preface" and the original division into three Cantos, may be read in Burton, "Cyclopædia of Wit and Humor," i., 19-22.

the title of "universal genius," which an eminent historian has lately given to him[1]; but, as a man of letters, his real aptitude lay in a direction in which his work, at the time of his premature death, had been only incidental. Had his life been spared—and it was laid down deliberately in the cause of his country and for the peace of the world—he would probably have found his true literary vocation in the writing of that history of the American Revolution, which Jefferson had long urged him to undertake.

Perhaps the two least significant specimens of his work as a prose writer are a pair of orations, which were produced under special temptations to rhetorical effusion and aridity,—the one for the Fourth of July, 1787,[2] the other for the Fourth of July, 1809.[3]

During his long residence abroad, he had two or three periods of activity as a prose writer, and chiefly in the discussion of political questions. His year of greatest productiveness seems to have been 1792, during which he

[1] H. Adams, "Hist. U. S.," i., 110–111.
[2] Niles, "Prin. and Acts," etc., 384–389.
[3] Pamphlet, 1809.

wrote portions of the notes, and perhaps the preface, for a London edition of Trumbull's "M'Fingal"; likewise, "Advice to the Privileged Orders in the Several States of Europe, resulting from the Necessity and Propriety of a General Revolution in the Principle of Government,"[1]—the most elaborate, and upon the whole, the ablest of his prose writings; also, "A Letter to the National Convention of France, on the Defects in the Constitution of 1791, and the Extent of the Amendments which ought to be Applied;"[2] finally, "A Letter to the People of Piedmont, on the Advantages of the French Revolution, and the Necessity of adopting its Principles in Italy."[3]

Toward the close of the last decade of the eighteenth century, his mind seems to have turned with uncommon interest to the affairs

[1] Part I., London, 1792. Part II., though written in 1792, was not published, owing to the interference of the government, until 1795, when it was "Printed and Sold by Daniel Isaac Eaton, Printer and Bookseller to the Supreme Majesty of the People, at the Cock and Swine, No. 74 Newgate Street." Part II. did not complete the work. A copy is in "The Political Writings of Joel Barlow," pp. iii.–xvi., 17–157.
[2] London, 1792. Also in Barlow's "Political Writings," 156–198.
[3] Barlow's "Political Writings," 199–235.

of his own country, as is shown, for example, by his pamphlet published in London in 1800, entitled "A View of the Public Debt, Receipts, and Expenditures of the United States," as well as by his first and second "Letter from Paris to the Citizens of the United States," the one in 1800 and the other in 1801.

In 1806, after his return to America, he published "Prospectus of a National Institution to be established in the United States,"[1]—an ably written and a very impressive scheme for a grand national university, to be founded at the capital, with the most enlightened and liberal provision both for original research and for instruction.

Perhaps nowhere else in his writings does Barlow appear to better advantage than he does in nearly the last product of his pen,—his "Letter to Henry Gregoire, Bishop, Senator, Compte of the Empire, and Member of the Institute of France, in reply to his Letter on the Columbiad."[2] This brochure, which is an expression of the author's whole mind and char-

[1] Pamphlet, printed anonymously. Washington, 1806.

[2] Washington, D. C., 1809; and reprinted, though without the full title, in "Life and Letters," etc., 221–233.

acter at a time when both had reached their highest point of ripeness and of gentle wisdom, can hardly fail to renew and to enlarge one's impression, not only of Barlow's intellectual ability, but of the breadth and beauty of his spirit. It is a model, also, of courteous theological discussion, furnishing, as he himself said, "one example of the calmness and candor with which a dispute may be conducted, even on the subject of religion."[1] Moreover, it is of especial interest for the authentic indications it affords as to Barlow's attitude toward Christianity,—a matter upon which he had been greatly misrepresented. He avows himself as still adhering, "from a conviction that they are right," to the religious sect in which he was born and educated[2]; and he solemnly denies the charges of religious apostasy which had been made against him in America by his political enemies. "It has even been said and published. . . . that I went to the bar of your Convention, when it was the fashion so to do, and made a solemn recantation of my Christian faith, declaring myself an atheist or deist, or

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 233. [2] *Ibid.*, 223.

some other anti-Christian apostate. . . . Now, as an active member of that Convention, a steady attendant at their sittings, and my most intimate friend, you know that such a thing could not have been done without your knowledge; you know therefore that it was not done; you know I never went but once to the bar of that Convention, which was on the occasion to which you allude in the letter now before me, to present an address from the Constitutional Society in London, of which I was a member. You know I always sympathized in your grief, and partook of all your resentment, while such horrors and blasphemies were passing, of which these typographical cannibals of reputation have made me a participant."[1] "You will see that I have nothing to do with the unbelievers who have attacked the Christian system, either before the French Revolution, or during, or since that monumental period. I am not one of them."[2]

[1] "Life and Letters," etc., 230–231. [2] *Ibid.*, 228.

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AND OTHER PRINTED DOCUMENTS, CITED IN THE FOREGOING WORK, WITH PLACES AND DATES OF PUBLICATION.

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AMERICA, or, A Poem on the Settlement of the British Colonies addressed to the Friends of Freedom and their Country. By a Gentleman educated at Yale College.
New Haven: n. d.
[The only copy of this poem known to me is in the Public Library of Boston].

AMERICAN POEMS, Selected and Original.
Litchfield: 1793.
[Only one vol. was issued. This was published anonymously; but the editor is known to have been Elihu Hubbard Smith].

BARLOW, JOEL, Dr. Watts's Imitation of the Psalms of David, Corrected and Enlarged by Joel Barlow. To which is added a Collection of Hymns; the Whole applied to the State of the Christian Church in General. The Third Ed.
Hartford: n. d.

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BARLOW, JOEL, The Vision of Columbus. A Poem, in Nine Books. The Fifth Ed. Corrected.
London: 1794.

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Washington: 1809.

BARLOW, JOEL, Letter to Henry Gregoire, Bishop, Senator, Compte of the Empire, and Member of the Institute of France, in reply to his Letter on "The Columbiad."
Washington: 1809.
[A copy of this Letter is in the Library of the New York Historical Society, where I read it; but in quoting from it, I have used the reprint as given by Todd, in his "Life and Letters of Joel Barlow," 221–233].

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